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Sight and Sound



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Trumbull's '2001'
and 'Blade Runner'

EXPLOITATION

Atom Egoyan's
erotic 'Exotica'

ROMANCE

Richard Linklater
interview
on 'Before Sunrise'

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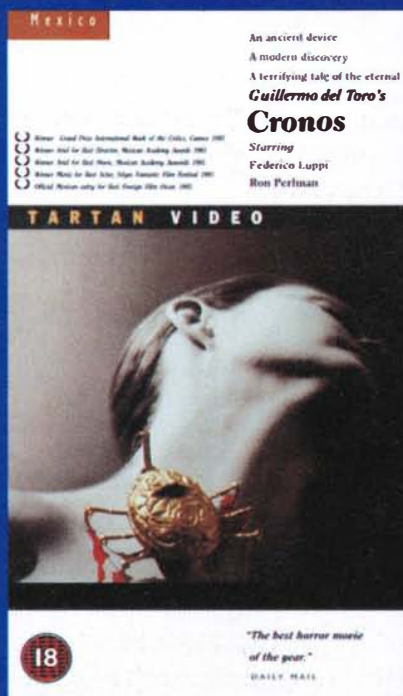
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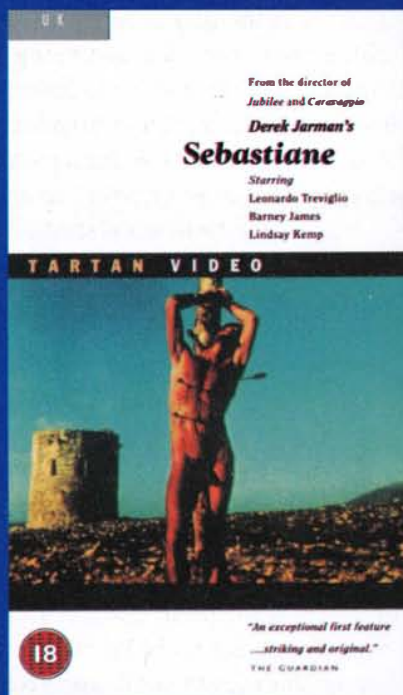
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Cosy cinema

Contributors to this issue

Janet Abrams has written widely on photography, architecture and design for *Blueprint*, *The Independent* and *i-D*

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Tony Rayns has written widely on many aspects of cinema; he recently curated the season of Korean cinema at the ICA

David Robinson is the author of many books on cinema, as well as this magazine's *The Chronicle of Cinema*

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Ben Thompson writes for *The Independent*

First impressions in the movies are lasting impressions. The audience assumes that the opening title sequence will establish the style, tone and subject matter of the film to follow. Similarly, anyone looking at the cover of Parliament's recently published National Heritage Committee report on The British Film Industry might infer a great deal, not about the welcome recommendations made to the Heritage Minister Stephen Dorrell to boost British film production, but about the *kind* of film industry being proposed.

Take the choice of photographs on the report's cover: Kenneth More in a tweed jacket, Hugh Grant in his *Four Weddings* gear, the *Chariots of Fire* competitors in flannels and long shorts, an impeccably tailored Dennis Price and Alec Guinness from *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. These we have loved, it seems to say: let's have more of the same, a film industry dressed by Hackett and The National Trust. Clearly the committee wish to emphasise the heritage aspect of British film to their fellow MPs, who perhaps rarely go to the cinema. But the document's preface also confirms the cosy parochialism of these stills, harking back approvingly to 40 years ago, when "British film-making teams produced a steady stream of movies, many of them successful, some of them with an often quirky identity."

Much of the report reads as if modest and sensible proposals were being put forward by comedian Harry Enfield's character Mr. Cholmondley-Warner to improve the traffic flow in a small market town of the 50s. The proposals themselves are vital to any realistic attempt to revive a feature film industry in the UK: immediate tax write-offs for British production expenditure, the curtailment of withholding tax, backing for The British Film Commission, a job-placement scheme, and a change in the funding formula for Channel 4 which would allow the channel to double its film

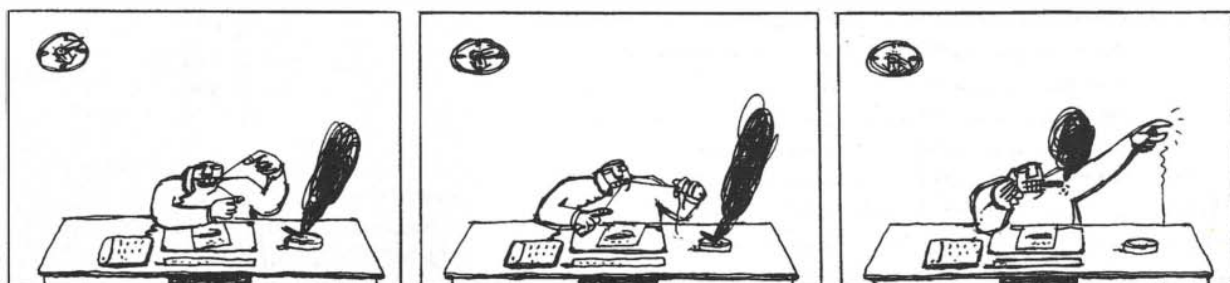
production expenditure. Yet the document is dispiriting, as much for what it excludes as for the pictures it foregrounds.

Little or no account is taken, for example, of the way the film industry operates globally, of how Britain and British film are part of a global economy. There is no sense of a world in which it is possible for a Ridley Scott to learn film-making in Britain, then to go and help to reinvent American cinema in Hollywood, before returning to buy up Shepperton and perhaps help reinvigorate British production. There's no understanding that Channel 4, Zenith, Working Title and other British production companies might want to be involved in films originating from elsewhere in the world. Committee chairman Gerald Kaufman's vision of an "integrated structure" similar to that which existed here in the 50s sounds as insular, unimaginative and little-Englander as the photos seem to suggest.

The committee stops short of pressurising certain British distributors – notably Rank – to invest more of their profits in production. "Their investment record in British film is lamentable for a company which is the biggest, the largest single and only integrated equivalent of a Hollywood studio," says Channel 4 head Michael Grade in the report, but to no avail. In fact the distributors as a whole have escaped any obligation to encourage British film, and here is the flaw in Kaufman's model. What use is his modest "integrated structure", producing a "steady stream" of sensibly budgeted, "often quirky" films, if the distributors won't play them at more than a few select screens? Until British film-makers gain the right to compete on equal terms in Britain with American product, by having access to a system of film distribution (as do the American majors), there can be no successful British film industry. However charming it looks and no matter how up to date its facilities, Kaufman's small market town will not thrive if it can be by-passed.

JERRY ON LINE #1

Peter Lydon – James Sillavan ©



'Jerry, I just had breakfast with Nile Grosspoint of Dotted Lines Productions to talk over us buying them. I had a generous helping of waffles with maple syrup and a lot of coffee. Nile drank purified water and ate 3 grapes. Yes, you're damn right I'm having second thoughts.'

The business

● Glaswegian readers will be familiar with the term "Disney", meaning something that is broken (because it "disnae work"). Readers who have emigrated from Clydeside to Burbank, however, are beginning to wonder whether the term may be more prophetic than humorous.

Burbank's most famous business, The Walt Disney Company, is clearly far from broken. But there are signs of turmoil in the Magic Kingdom. The last time this happened was in the early 80s, when Uncle Walt's successors were clinging grimly on to power while all around were turning into megacorporations. That never quite happened to Disney. Instead, the family was pushed aside and, under the ruthless guidance of two former Paramount executives, Michael Eisner and Jeffrey Katzenberg (who both joined in 1984) the company became a diversified corporation.

Film production accounts for only around 35 per cent of Disney corporate revenues, but it's the effective motor for all the other businesses. So, theme parks and merchandising notwithstanding, one pillar of the Eisner-Katzenberg plan was to rejuvenate Disney's by-then stagnant animation output. This produced a string of hits, starting with *The Little Mermaid* and continuing on through *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin* and *The Lion King*. Each one outdid the last, and *The Lion King* outpaced even *Forrest Gump*, to become last year's most successful film.

At the same time, the new management expanded into more adult-oriented production through the Touchstone Pictures division, less saccharine family entertainment under the Hollywood Pictures banner, and even art-house movies, following the 1993 acquisition of Miramax.

The poor performance of EuroDisney (already recorded on these pages) has been causing some discomfort at 500 South Buena Vista Street, Burbank, for the past couple of years. But it has proved less painful than might have been suspected, since a large chunk of the Paris operation's deficit consisted of licensing money due to the parent organisation, meaning that EuroDisney's main creditor was Disney itself.

No, the real shock has been the arrival of a phenomenon achingly familiar elsewhere but unknown at Disney for a decade: corporate instability. First, company president Frank Wells was killed in a helicopter crash on 3 April, 1994. Then Eisner underwent by-pass surgery. Finally, Katzenberg suddenly quit his post as chairman of Walt Disney Studios last August. Within six weeks, he had teamed up with Steven Spielberg and David Geffen in what is now called Dreamworks. Katzenberg had reportedly been bickering with Eisner ever since Wells' death (Wells wasn't



Play it again Becker: Gérard Depardieu and Vanessa Paradis in 'Elisa', above; Isabelle Adjani, top

replaced: Eisner just took over his duties). If they had been fighting, Eisner must have won. He usually does.

The subsequent reorganisation brought in producer/director Joe Roth as head of production, thus giving Disney a high-profile production boss who would be unlikely to play the same corporate powergames with Eisner that Katzenberg reportedly had. It also involved the promotion of veteran TV executive Richard Frank to the new post of chairman of Walt Disney Television and Telecommunications.

Frank was supposed to steer Disney out onto the information superhighway. The Disney press department's 'unattributable comments' section went into overdrive, suggesting to reporters that Frank was a company man, unlike Katzenberg who "only got involved in the glamour stuff". "We don't need him, but we do need guys like Frank," was the subtext.

Imagine then the consternation when, on 10 March this year, Frank resigned. Never mind the Hollywood gossip: Frank's departure prompted the first significant fall in Disney stock for some time (it dropped three per cent). That is the kind of thing that upsets Eisner, who has stock options the way you and I have phone bills.

But apparently it was all part of a grander scheme. "The corporate side is consolidating power at the expense of the studio side," one of those fabled 'insiders' told *Daily Variety*.

This, of course, has become a familiar cry in Hollywood, Tinseltown being a place where everyone likes to believe they're part of an industry, but where no one wants to behave like a businessman. But with film-making now languishing at the bottom of the entertainment heap in terms of average return on investment – way behind TV, video and even cable – and with the Japanese buyers of studios running up huge losses, a business-like approach to the entertainment business is becoming all but mandatory.

It won't be the first time this has happened. 1928, 1934, 1946 and 1953 all saw much the same desperate attempt by Hollywood to persuade the investment community that it was quite grown up really. The fact that Disney – which had previously managed to prosper without being overtly run by accountants – has joined the club suggests that 1995 will be another such year. It never lasts, however, because the movies are essentially a risk business. And inspired risk-taking – whether it results in a *Forrest Gump* or a *Waterworld*, an *Ishtar* or a *Mrs Doubtfire* – always wins out in the end.

Meanwhile, however, be prepared for some numbingly cautious movies.

There are, they always say, two very sexy things about the film business: the money and the stars. Since the preceding item was all about money, this one is about stars – and sexy ones at that.

12 years ago, in 1983, Jean Becker – son of pre-New Wave Jacques Becker ('*Touchez pas au grishni*', '*Le Trou*') – took a middle-of-the-road French detective novel by Sébastien Japrisot called '*L'Été meurtrier*' ('*One Deadly Summer*') and turned it into an unforgettable showcase for Isabelle Adjani, done up in the kind of clothing that Laura Dern wore in '*Wild At Heart*', only tighter. Adjani, then 28, played a sexy teenager who reduced a French village to jelly (and, in several cases, dust).

After a decade away from directing, Becker has given new credence to the auteur principle by returning with '*Elisa*', a very similar story in which sultry French pop star Vanessa Paradis (age unknown, but certainly not 17) plays a voluptuous teenager who reduces all around her, including Gérard Depardieu, to jelly.

It's only Paradis' second film (the first was '*Noce blanche*' in 1989) and, at time of writing, it had already been seen by two and a half million French moviegoers. Oops, I almost said two and a half million Frenchmen.

● Nearly 10 years ago, Mr Busy was introduced to a cheerful young man called Jukka Makela, who had just set up a new company called Finnkino. Over the next five years and against all odds, I watched Makela – a member of a long-established family of Finnish cinema owners – turn Finnkino into a cinema empire, in a country with a population of five million.

Finland is a strange market, showing little domestic interest in its (to an outside observer) most famous sons, the Kaurismäki brothers. Instead, it has consistently rewarded local comedian Vesa-Matti Loiri, who stars as the gormless Uno Turhapura (which apparently translates as 'Numbskull Emptybrook').

While Sweden's cinema business edged into crisis and Norway's stagnated once the North Sea gas money ran out, Finland's appeared to flourish and, with it, Finnkino.

Loiri's fifteenth outing – *Numbskull Emptybrook*, *Mr President of the Republic of Finland* – was by far the most popular Finnish film of 1992, while 1993 saw another local lad – Finnish-born director Renny Harlin – triumph there with *Cliffhanger*, making Finland one of the few snowbound countries to appreciate Sylvester Stallone's sub-zero skills.

Distributing films from Buena Vista, Columbia TriStar and Fox plus money of the big independents and owning a major cinema chain, Finnkino was Finnish cinema. It was also among the first Western film companies to operate in the Soviet Union, running



I'm in charge: Michael Eisner, with one of his corporate Disney chums

a handful of movie theatres under license in the Leningrad area when perestroika was still young. With the break-up of the Union, the company moved into Estonia and Latvia in a big way.

But local audiences began to decline at the turn of the decade, and things started to go badly wrong for Finnkino last year. By October, it was in receivership, with reported debts of FIM 50 million (\$6.5 million), which means that, if everyone in Finland had given it a quid, Finnkino would still have been broke.

Come January, the company was bought by Finland's leading newsagent, Rautakirja, which also owns the country's main video distributor, Europa Vision. As of 2 January, the energetic Jukka Makela was Mr Finnkino no more.

With France going bananas over the centenary of cinema, it's good to see that one-time-rebel-turned-cantankerous-institution Jean-Luc Godard has lost none of his ability to be bloody-minded about things.

The only two semi-official celebrations of the centenary to have been unveiled so far – Agnès Varda's 'Les Cent Et Une Nuits' ('A Hundred and One Nights') and Edgar Reitz's 'Die

Nacht der Regisseure' ('The Night of the Film-Makers') – were less than rapturously received in Berlin. But at least they were made in time for the event they were celebrating.

Godard's Ffr26 (£3.25) million history of the seventh art – entitled, for some reason, 'For Ever Mozart' – doesn't start shooting in southern France until August. "It will be about the making of a film," says the director, "which will be described in certain sequences like the making of a child. The aim is not to make a film within a film, like 'La Nuit américaine' or even 'Le Mépris', but to describe the movements of the film-maker in action." A bit like 'Sympathy for the Devil' or 'Tout va bien', in fact?

Still, the director has lost none of his way with ideological aphorisms ("Ce n'est pas une image juste, c'est juste une image," from 'Tout va bien', was always my favourite). "It's not the centenary of cinema that is being celebrated," says Mr G (still employing his old friend the set-em-up/knock-em-down sentence structure to excoriate the present beanfeast), "It is the centenary of the first time anyone paid to get in."

● Here are two names, one of which you will probably know, the other of which you probably won't: Roger Corman and Alain Sirtzky.

Corman, one-time King of the Z fea-



Dark dreams: Edgar Reitz's 'The Night of the Film-Makers'

tures (films so cheap they didn't even qualify as Bs) is as active as ever as a producer, churning out low-budget movies that go straight to video. He is now busy using Irish tax breaks to set up in Connemara.

Sirtzky, who is based in France, has been just as successful in his way, focusing on erotic movies. He produced some of the *Emmanuelle*

flicks, plus another seven based on the life and hard times of the Marquis de Sade's much-undone heroine, Justine. Now the pair have linked up, drawing on money from Germany (Leo Kirch's Beta Taurus) and Japan (Toho-Kushinsha) to make a slate of films using Corman's methods and Sirtzky's subject matter. Bet you can't wait.

BUDAPEST NOTES

Lessons in economy

Several years after the revolution, the cinemas of the former socialist Eastern Europe are still reeling from the changeover from state subsidy to market economy. In the late 1990s, recovery – even survival – seems only a remote possibility in a time of Hollywood hegemony and universal economic crisis.

If there is hope, it is, predictably, in Hungary. Even before the first free elections in the late 80s, the Hungarian film industry was reformed so as to anticipate new conditions and to give the studios more production freedom. A film fund amounting to some \$8 million a year (not huge; but production costs are markedly lower than in Western Europe) is administered by a Kuratorium, formed mostly of people from outside the film industry. Competition between the studios (and within them between film-makers) has become bitter as inflation swells and the fund is cut back. Recrimination and accusations of favouritism and prejudice in the allocation of budgets are rife.

For all that, the Hungarian cinema managed this year to present a united front for its 26th annual film week. 20 features were shown, as well as 40 out of a total production of 160 documentaries. Even though many of these so-called documentaries are only

mini-budget video interviews, it was striking that others dealt frankly and even brutally with social problems like urban slums (István Tényi's *Diary of a Concrete Jungle*), drugs (Béla Doszpod's *One Day I Decided: Life instead of Drugs*), infanticide (Péter Gábor and Ágota Varga's *Child Murders*) and poverty (Ferenc Moldoványi's *If We Eat a Beaver...*, András Salamon's *Child Beggars*, László Bartus' *Hopelessness*). Social documentary is a genre new to Hungary since the old socialist societies did not recognise any social ills to document. The grand old man of Hungarian cinema, Miklós Jancsó, at 74 apparently unable to find financing for his feature projects, has continued a series of lyrical documentaries on vanishing Jewish tradition, with *Message of Stones*.

Of the formal industry productions, the best has Judit Elek's *Awakening*, a delicate and perceptive portrait of a young girl growing up in the Stalinist era, solacing her loneliness with the imagined companionship of her dead mother. Otherwise – a quite new characteristic of Hungarian cinema – the most interesting feature production is to be found in the shoe-string, independent sector. Easily the most talented and original film on show in Budapest was 34-year-old József Pacskovszky's *The Wondrous*

Voyage of Esti Kornél. Based on two very short stories by the writer Dezső Kosztolányi (1885-1936), the elegantly structured script intertwines two train journeys, taken by the same character, as a virginal teenager and as a successful, disillusioned author of 48 travelling to Germany in 1933.

Decorative opulence belies the film's extreme poverty (production was several times interrupted). But penury has only stimulated Pacskovszky and his cinematographer Francisco Gozon to beautiful invention. Without enough lamps to light the train corridor they have devised striking expressionist effects. Unable to afford exteriors to their train, they have devised an enchanting conceit, making the view from the train

window a cinema screen, with all the convenience of close-ups. Faultlessly cast and acted, this looks a model for European cinema – making a virtue of necessity; exploiting a very national theme, setting and subject with imagination and universal appeal.

Mao the Real Man, again made for a derisory budget and shot on video, is an inspired comic idea, scripted by an exceptional young comedy writer, András Székér, and directed with the required poker-face integrity by Szilveszter Siklosi. A cod documentary, it tells how Mao actually died on the Long March, and was secretly replaced by his renegade lookalike brother who had emigrated to the US in 1906, to become boss of the Chicago meat market mafia. It becomes more and more preposterous, eventually involving the Kennedy assassination; and a final title invites the audience to examine their own gullibility.

Video economies also made possible György Szomjas's arresting *Kisses and Scratches*, the record of a lesbian affair between a married mother and her baby-sitter, mixing documentary and the real-life experience of the non-professional actors with Godardian stylisation. In the work of these Budapest independents, at least, there is a promise of screen life after socialism. *David Robinson*



EXPLOITATI

With 'Exotica', his new erotic and psychological thriller, Atom Egoyan continues his quest for a Cinema of Disappointment. He talks with Jonathan Romney



ONS

● Atom Egoyan makes bitterly disappointing films. They begin by stirring our curiosity – our desire to play detective or analyst, or simply our prurient longing for a glimpse of the louche, the exotic. And when finally they deliver what we're looking for, they invariably frustrate us – all we discover is that revelation can never be satisfactory. We learn that there are always more layers to the onion, or that it was never really an onion in the first place. As Egoyan's new film *Exotica* makes explicit, this director's work resembles the consummate art of male frustration that is striptease – we await the moment of laying bare only to have it dawn on us that the body is the one thing we *don't* want to see (just yet). His films are structured to exemplify a full-blown erotics of cinema, with all the attendant play of sadism and masochism. In that sense, his is the most profoundly *anti-erotic* cinema imaginable.

Egoyan's first feature *Next of Kin* (1984) began with the image of an unidentified bag going round on an airport carousel. It immediately poses the key questions that underlie his films. Whose baggage is this? Where's it from? What do we find if we unpack it? *Exotica* revisits this image. Its first words, spoken by one customs official to his junior as they scan a suspected smuggler, are: "You have to ask yourself – what brought the person to this point? You have to convince yourself that this person has something hidden that you have to find." This is a pitch to our curiosity, too, and it's not that different from the come-on spiel that strip-club MC Eric (Elias Koteas) gives his customers as he invites them to pay \$5 to have a stripper "reveal the mysteries of her world."

But if we pay the price of admission, what guarantees satisfaction? At one point in the film, a younger Eric says he feels he wasn't ever meant to be satisfied. The woman he's talking to replies, "Maybe you want it to slip away – the thing you think you're about to have." And consequently the film itself – a baroque construction of ellipses, flashbacks and repetitions – is angled to provide us with the constant anxiety/satisfaction of deferral.

His most complex essay in the Cinema of Disappointment, Egoyan's *Exotica* is built around the metaphors of striptease as psychological unmasking, narrative unpacking, commerce and contract. Layer after layer of meaning is revealed, although we're never quite sure whose "mysteries" we expect to discover (the film makes it remarkably difficult to identify a 'central' character). In the first 20 minutes, the threads come at us thick and fast. Thomas (Don McKellar), a nervous young pet shop owner who is smuggling goods, makes it through customs and shares a cab with a man who offers him ballet tickets instead of his share of the ride; Thomas will later use the tickets, at the ballet to procure himself a series of male sexual partners. He is meanwhile being audited by Francis (Bruce Greenwood), a tax official and a regular customer of the strip club *Exotica*, who is obsessed by Christina (Mia Kirshner), who performs, dressed as a schoolgirl. *Exotica* is presided over by proprietor Zoe (Arsinée Khanjian), who has made a contract with Eric to make her pregnant. Eric, also obsessed with

Christina, presides over the club, spurring his customers to buy across-the-table intimacies with the dancers. The circle of avoidance and negotiation is complete when Francis, banned from his club, does a deal with Thomas – an outsider sexually, but also the outsider in terms of the narrative – and brings him into the world of *Exotica* as his substitute.

It's only at the end, in a downbeat and extremely simple flashback scene, that Egoyan gives us some sort of 'explanation' of what's on these people's minds, of what's making their lives unworkable. But it's no sort of conclusion – it only makes us want to go back to the beginning and start again. It's a structure Egoyan has used before – notably in *The Adjuster* (1991), whose final moment similarly explains nothing but rather, so to speak, incinerates what's gone before. (Egoyan films tend to come together or fall apart with real or figurative conflagrations).

In his Director's Statement, Egoyan accepts that *Exotica* is structured like a striptease; but points out that this was only his analysis after the event. "The film wasn't meant to support a theory," he says, "it wasn't constructed that way. I do find it fascinating how the ending is very cathartic for some people, and other people find it wasn't what they expected or needed at that point. I liked the ending. All these relationships, where people's emotions are so carefully guarded and so tenuously exchanged... suddenly you can see that for all the pretence, everything is rooted in this very real relationship between Christina and Francis."

The most film's controversial element is the way it plays with the suggestion of paedophilia, with Christina doing her act dressed in a school-girl's tartan skirt, white shirt and tie. Eric repeatedly teases his customers with the riddle, "What gives a schoolgirl her special innocence?" This disguises another question: what makes him, or Francis or us, want to invest in the mystique of innocence, and how does it become sexualised?

What Egoyan's also offering us is a tease which places the film in a particular art-movie niche: the erotic psychological thriller, one that French directors have been exploiting since time immemorial. Of course, there's a perilous borderline between alluding to exploitation, and exploitation period.

"There are two answers – one is what the film itself represents, the other is how it's marketed. I've been very demanding that the image of Christina dressed as a schoolgirl won't be used on any of the posters, because it's an image that only makes sense in the context of the film. It was an image I was very protective of, not in the sense of creating a mystification round it, but I was aware of how it could be abused.

"The film does play with that tension, there's no question about it. There is that use of titillation, sexual manipulation. Because when you get down to it, I don't think it's an erotic film at all. You begin by assuming the relationship between Francis and Christina is perverse, that he has a paedophilic attraction to her. When you realise what is actually going on, it's platonic in the truest sense. He's projecting onto her something that's extremely pure. Though that has its consequences as well. ►



Paying the price of admission: Elias Koteas as Eric, MC at the club, where Christina (Mia Kirshner) dances, in Atom Egoyan's *Exotica*.

left: Christina performing at the club, where men go who wish to invest sexually in the mystique of innocence, above and top



Perverse therapy: fantasy football life in Atom Egoyan's 'The Adjuster'

◀ The environment [of the club] is sexual, so that can't help but imbue what he's seeing in her with a sexual content. And that tortures him, as he's trying to work out some sort of therapeutic relationship with her. He's trying to heal some sense of grief – which becomes infused with guilt, because of where he's chosen to conduct this therapy."

All Egoyan's films could be said to explore therapy in one way or another, with his characters elaborating byzantine rituals of repetition, and constantly displacing their obsessions onto other characters who may or may not fit them. In *Next of Kin* (1984), an isolated young man invents an alternative family for himself; in *Speaking Parts* (1989), a woman tries to 'cast' an actor as her dead brother; the hero of *The Adjuster* obsessively becomes involved with his clients, while his own household is invaded by a couple who live out their own fantasies as meticulously staged performance art. Therapy in Egoyan's films always goes too far, and is invariably compromised by the vehicles people choose for it, usually TV or video technology.

"There's a group of analysts in Toronto who have looked at all my films. They've told me that from their point of view, all my films deal with a process called 'faulty mourning' – when a patient builds a ritual of mourning which only accentuates and exaggerates the sense of loss which they think they're dealing with.

"In all the films there seems to be someone who's in the process of grieving another person's loss. But in the process, they're somehow underlining and distorting what it is that they've lost in the first place. In all of them, people extend this sense of loss through the relationship with an image, and because technology has the ability to preserve a moment, that moment can become fetishised and live way beyond its anticipated life.

"In *Exotica*, I've taken away the insistence on technology – apart from one video moment – but it's replaced by the transposition of someone into an icon. Christina's uniform becomes what video technology was in the other films."

Because the ubiquitous video eye for once recedes into the background, *Exotica* is harder than its predecessors simply to pigeonhole as

an 'Egoyan film' – his preoccupations and tropes have been so consistent that he's practically created his own genre. It may not, ultimately, be as tight-knit a film as *The Adjuster*, in which the hermetic anxiety genuinely admits of no relief. It could be argued that *Exotica* has too many thematic and narrative strands for its own good – although it's that very sense of unresolved over-abundance that makes it so suggestive and hard to exhaust. The one notion of exoticism that seems insufficiently assimilated into the film's argument is that which attaches to race; and that's partly because it centres on characters who are less central, or even absent. Francis' wife and daughter are black; another white character, Harold, lives with his daughter in a black neighbourhood almost paradoxically dangerous. There's a clear mirror image of Francis here; what's not so clear is how it dovetails with the rest – a problem Egoyan admits he hasn't entirely resolved.

"There are two ideas being explored in the film – that which is outside your cultural experience, and that which is outside your own way of perceiving your memory. At what point do our own experiences and feelings become exotic to us? At what point do we transpose people we're attracted to onto the level of metaphor? If I deal with that theme, I have to suggest it through what the viewer is also projecting. So you have Harold in a clearly black atmosphere wearing a Bob Marley T-shirt – he's someone who feels more comfortable in that cultural context but there is something askew about it. He's made a parody of himself.

"I want the film to provoke controversy, but what I find far more controversial than the image of a schoolgirl is the use of colour in the film – the fact that Francis' wife is black, that Harold lives in a black environment, that Thomas purchases men of colour. I wanted these images to be outrageous, to really provoke a level of anger – but somehow that doesn't seem to be as integral to the viewing experience as I thought they would be."

Ethnic identity has been a constant enigma in Egoyan's films – the jigsaw piece that always refuses to fit. Many of his films draw on Egoyan's situation as a film-maker on one hand

committed to a post-modern notion of identity constructed through technology, and on the other involved with his own Armenian origins, with all the connotations they carry of a 'pure', 'natural' identity and unmediated history. It's a situation he analysed in uncomfortably personal terms in his 1993 film *Calendar*, made for German TV. Egoyan himself appears as a photographer obsessed with the wife who left him on a visit to Armenia (played by his own wife, and regular star, Arsinée Khanjian). His hardest film to watch – both formally and for the discomfort it evokes – *Calendar* is still the fullest résumé of Egoyan's therapeutic mechanisms.

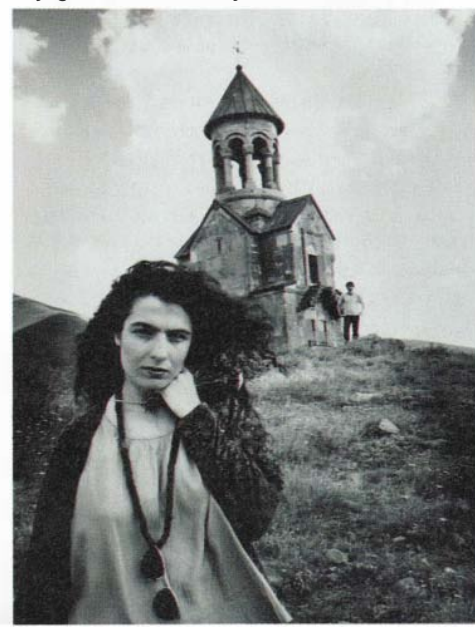
"I'm a prisoner of the situation I've been talking about – we do have an inexplicable desire to make a metaphor of our own neuroses. That's what art is about – all the characters in my films are failed or unrecognised artists. Francis is directing his life. The Adjuster is a director. They are all involved in a process that I am myself am engaged in. I make a film like *Calendar* to come to terms with that process. You believe that by putting yourself in a context where there's cultural fragmentation and dissociation, you will deal with your own sense of dislocation – you normalise your own worst fears. It becomes perverse when you set into motion the machinery which may define the level of destruction you find in the film itself."

Egoyan's films are undoubtedly as perverse as they might conceivably be therapeutic. They're scarcely a feel-good experience for the viewer; they don't provide catharsis as easy relief. And as a film-maker, he is surely aware that by working through your own anxieties on screen, you're less likely to quell them than you are to reaffirm their centrality. If you pick up Pandora's box, that neat package spinning round on the baggage carousel, then sooner or later, you have to take it through Customs.

Still, the intensely self-referential manner in which Egoyan works does offer some immediate consolations. "The most important thing," he says, "is to be open about the process, at every opportunity to demystify the process of making films – there's nothing romantic about it at all. If my work only serves to illustrate the contradictions and perversities of making images of that, I'll be happy."

Exotica opens on 28 April and is reviewed on page 45 of this issue

Playing the wife: Arsinée Khanjian in 'Calendar'



EVERYBODY KNOWS

In what ways does 'Exotica' mark a new development in Egoyan's art? By Tony Rayns

Is it OK to draw an analogy with Russ Meyer? 'Exotica' is not the film of a hardy independent director working for the first time with major studio back-up, but it does represent a breakthrough for Atom Egoyan in the way that 'Beyond the Valley of the Dolls' did for Meyer. Nothing qualitatively different from the earlier movies, but a broader canvas, a richer palette and a clearer rapprochement with a larger audience. The analogy, however, is ahistorical. Meyer was invited into 20th Century Fox in a doomed, last-ditch attempt to salvage an out-of-date production method, whereas the latest venture from Ego Film is perfectly positioned to cement Egoyan's future as a name-brand auteur – the prerequisite, of course, for survival as an independent these days.

'Exotica' does differ in one crucial respect from Egoyan's previous films: the viewer is not expected to get hip to absurdist characters and situations. Its plot does turn out to hinge on an element of hysterical melodrama (the back-story involves a man losing his wife to his brother, who then manages to kill the woman and cripple himself in a car crash) and its principal setting, the Exotica nightclub, is an improbably up-market joint with fantastically elegant strippers and the world's most improbable MC patter. But everything here is rooted in recognisable social realities: there is nothing like the central conceit of 'Next of Kin', in which a jovially 'ethnic' Armenian family welcomes a stray WASP as its long-lost son without batting an eyelid, and no-one like the filthy rich but suicidal behavioural-artist couple in 'The Adjuster', whose 'erotic' fantasies involve exhibitionism, football teams and schoolboys, not to mention other people's houses.

The corollary of this return to a kind of realism is that Egoyan's penchant for teasing and baffling the viewer is kept in check. This time characters are introduced in vignettes which establish who they are, how they behave and what they do for a living. The cross-cutting between them takes a minimum of time to forge the necessary connections, and overlapping sound is used to keep the continuity clear. This is not to say that Egoyan has lost his provocative edge. The character Francis, for example, is introduced as a client at Exotica, monopolising the services of a lap-dancer named Christina whose shtick is to dress like a schoolgirl. Brown is next seen driving home a genuinely school-aged girl and paying her before she gets out of the car; there is calculatedly ambiguous dialogue about whether or not she enjoys what she does for him.

We are invited, in other words, to jump to salacious conclusions for a few moments – but only until Egoyan finesses the tease by revealing the real mystery: why does Francis hire the schoolgirl to baby sit for him when all she actually does is practise her flute in his empty house? This mystery is later compounded (but at the same time, in terms of the film's dénouement, defused) when it's revealed that the girl is actually his niece Tracey. The same processes of gradual deepening and clarification are applied to the film's other enigmatic elements, notably the recurrent flashbacks to a group of people combing verdant hills for a missing person.

The obvious similarities between 'Exotica' and 'The Adjuster', 'Speaking Parts' and the rest confirm that Egoyan's last film 'Calendar' was something of a sidetrack for him, albeit one that he needed to take for personal as well as artistic reasons.

'Calendar' was the film in which he finally dealt with what it means to him to be ethnically Armenian while feeling not at all culturally Armenian; it was also a low-budget, formalist experiment, financed by German television and destined for smallish audiences. 'Exotica' suggests that in future Egoyan will transpose his interests in racial and trans-cultural questions into more general terms, perhaps less immediately personal to him but clearly easier for multicultural audiences to engage with. Similarly, it suggests that the formal dislocations and ambiguities of the earlier movies can be reframed in much more audience-friendly terms without losing too much of their edge. In fact, it's hard to think of any comparable film-maker who has managed this transition with so little compromise and so much impact. 'Exotica' finds the emotive in the philosophical and vice versa, and deserves every dollar of its success.

Egoyan clearly needed to make this transition for the good of his future career, but it's fascinating to notice that it has gone hand-in-glove with his attempts to force himself to deal with gay characters and themes. Egoyan isn't gay, but something more than an aspiration to political correctness has been driving him to come to terms with gayness. 'The Adjuster' was first conceived as a variation on Pasolini's 'Teorema', with the 'angel' Noah Render offering sexual succour as well as emotional care to his clients, straight and gay; but the one surviving episode with the gay man is one of the most oblique in a film notable for leaving the viewer literally and figuratively in the dark for much of the time. And 'Calendar' was first drafted as a gay story: the original outline described a husband and

wife team on assignment in Armenia and had the husband leave his wife for their driver.

In 'Exotica', we see pet-shop owner/smuggler Thomas pick up three non-Caucasian men by offering them spare tickets for the ballet; he refuses the sexual follow-through with the first two, but takes home the third, who turns out to be a customs inspector – less than a dream date, since he first makes fun of Thomas's hirsute torso and then makes off with two illegally imported hyacinth macaw eggs which Thomas was incubating at home. The point of this episode is to set up an elaborate parallel between Thomas and the tax inspector Francis, who will eventually blackmail him into working as his surrogate in a revenge scheme: Thomas loses his eggs just as Francis lost his daughter. (The parallel is underlined through visual motifs – two-way mirrors, parrots – and backed up by the cross-cutting between nights at the ballet and nights at Exotica.) The gay character, in short, is co-opted into the film's fatalistic scheme of things and there is no sense of directorial self-congratulation in the credible and charming representation of Thomas's one-night-stand. Coming after 'The Adjuster' and the rewritten 'Calendar', though, this represents definite progress.

'Exotica' takes its overall tone from the wry Leonard Cohen song 'Everybody Knows', which Christina uses as the backing track for her act at the club. The lyrics are wonderfully apropos: "Everybody knows that the dice are loaded. Everybody rolls with their fingers crossed. Everybody knows the war is over. Everybody knows the good guys lost." Egoyan's dice are certainly loaded, but he has now figured out how to get his viewers to keep their fingers crossed.



The real thing: Eric, the MC at Exotica, above, is obsessed by Christina the dancer

● Only in America: Tim Burton, one of the most bankable film-makers who ever lived, expends the credit of his success in sincere, black-and-white tribute to the obscure, tawdry vision of Edward D. Wood, Jr (1924-78), the alcoholic, heterosexual transvestite and sometime pornographer known affectionately as “the world’s worst director”. As nothing in America can be truly said to exist outside the media’s glare, there is no such thing as negative publicity. (The value of celebrity is absolute, as Wood well knew.) To be the World’s Worst Film-maker is to personify a particular high concept.

Playing both ends against the middlebrow, Burton’s feature opened in the US, bearing the imprimaturs of both Walt Disney and the New York Film Festival. There’s no mistaking it for anything but an art film, yet it’s sweeter than *Cinderella* (and nearly as sexless). The dank aroma of Salvation Army thrift stores that clings to the Wood oeuvre evaporates in the simulated sunlight of a Disney production with a hot young cast. Ed Wood as Johnny Depp, loved by the luscious Sarah Jessica Parker and Patricia Arquette and admired, if only platonically, by Bill Murray. Ed Wood, recovered failure, subject of a feel-good movie... for creeps!

Wood flourished, if that is the word, during the mid-50s heyday of skid-row supernaturalism, the period of exploitation horror flicks and cold war science fiction, produced for downtown grind theatres and the presumably uncritical teenage audience of the drive-in trade. Wood’s peers include schlockmeisters William Castle and Roger Corman, although he had neither the former’s knack for exploitation nor the latter’s

gift for low-budget film-making. A casual *mise-en-scène* of half-dressed sets and visible Klieg lights is Wood’s hallmark, and an unbridled pragmatism (three consecutive scenes shot in the same location) is his *modus operandi*.

What characterises the laughably inept *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (1958) – a movie constructed around a few shots of Bela Lugosi taken shortly before Lugosi’s death – and Wood’s other features is their non-existent pacing; their long, pointless exchanges between untalented performers; and their near-documentary atmosphere of genuine befuddlement. Wood’s action montages are so perfunctory as to be a slap in the face of public taste. His major innovation is a checkerboard effect of mismatched day and night scenes. *Bride of the Monster* (1954), also with Bela Lugosi, is less of an actual horror film than the idea of one.

Wood established himself in a fringe Hollywood beyond the imagining of Nathanael West. (It’s not surprising to learn that he ended up directing hardcore porn, and that his last opus was an 8mm “home study” segment of *The Encyclopaedia of Sex*.) In addition to the burnt-out, pitifully emaciated Lugosi, B-movie workhorse Lye Talbot, the talentless progeny of the money-men who bankrolled him and sundry veterans of 30s Westerns, Wood’s impoverished productions feature such showbiz oddities as Criswell the television psychic, Tor Johnson the 400 pound Swedish wrestler, Vampira the beatnik ghoulish girl, and a defective prop octopus that had been stolen from Republic studio.

No more oddball than his side-show entourage, Wood was a cross-dresser with a particular fetish for angora sweaters – the unconvincing



magic, crackpot logic, and decomposing glamour of his films mirror his own. *Glen or Glenda* (1953), his first and most substantial feature, is a passionate defence of transvestism – and thus free expression – cast in the mode of a half-heartedly “scientific” exploitation flick. Wood’s convoluted narrative is based on two case histories, which are recounted (with Foucaultian aptness) by a



An offer he can't refuse: Johnny Depp as Ed Wood, offered the pink angora sweater that was his passion and would become his trademark

What fascinates Tim Burton about Ed Wood, the World's Worst Film-maker? And why is he paying homage in his new film to Wood's strange and tawdry 50s vision? By J. Hoberman



psychiatrist to a police officer. In the first, the tormented Glen, forever ogling the lingerie displays on Hollywood Boulevard and played by Wood himself, gets married and lives happily ever after with his wife's wardrobe. In the second, inspired by the then-recent example of Christine Jorgensen, a disgruntled G.I. goes all the way and gets an operation.

With *Glen or Glenda*, the Wood style is already full-blown. Every significant moment – and there are many – is underscored by the same flash of stock-footage lightning. Everyone from a bearded lady to the cop on the beat sits around glomming the same dog-eared copy of a tabloid, headlined *World Shocked By Sex Change*. (The end of the film is announced when this well-thumbed paper lands in the garbage.) Formally, the entire movie is structured to suggest an anterior parody of Alain Resnais' *Mon oncle d'Amérique*, with Lugosi instead of Professor Henri Laborit. Like Laborit, the star never interacts with other characters. Cloistered in his laboratory (littered with test tubes, human skulls, a crystal ball), he kibbitzes the action in cutaway: "Bevare! Bevare! The story must be told!"

As bad film-makers go, Wood is less provocative and mindboggling than the Black Pioneer, Oscar Micheaux, or than the Great Negation, Andy Warhol. Still, at his best (which is to say, at his worst), Wood's mysterious illogic deforms the simplest narrative clichés so absolutely that you're forced to consider them anew. As the big lie of chronology is confounded by Wood's imperfect continuity, so the nature of screen acting is foregrounded by cloddish bits of business, the notion of originality undermined by the interpolation of library footage.

The rich realism induced by Wood's failure to convince is of incomparably greater aesthetic interest than the seamless naturalism of conventional narrative films – but this particular form of radical demystification is not the source of his current appeal. Opening to overwhelmingly positive reviews (a "very good film about a very bad

film-maker", said *The New York Times*), Burton's *Ed Wood* is only the most visible instance of the Ed Wood revival that began with Harry and Michael Medved's 1980 wise-guy paean to bad movies, *The Golden Turkey Awards*.

The excavation of the Wood oeuvre continued throughout the 1980s. (Michael Medved, meanwhile, opportunistically parlayed the adolescent facetiousness of *The Golden Turkeys* into a career as a television movie-reviewer and, in his 1992 tract *Hollywood vs. America*, a rightwing proponent of so-called family values.) There was even money to be made. The distributor who obtained posthumous rights to Wood's official chef d'oeuvre, *Plan 9 from Outer Space*, proved his business acumen by making a small fortune with a decade of Bad Movie festivals.

Variety, which ignored Wood's movies when they first appeared, now has advertisements for "The Ed Wood collection" and, according to *Premiere*, there's a campaign underway to get Wood a star on the pavement of Hollywood Boulevard. Rudolph Grey's 1992 oral history *Nightmare of Ecstasy: The Life and Art of Edward D. Wood Jr.*, has been followed by two made-for-video documentaries, *Look Back in Angora* and *The Haunted World of Ed Wood*, and two as-yet unproduced biographical musical plays, *The Worst!* by Josh Alan Friedman, and *Plan 9 from Yucca Street* by the New York film reviewer known as The Phantom of the Movies.

Despite (or perhaps, because of) the fact that its score is entirely uncredited library music, the original *Plan 9 from Outer Space* soundtrack has been released on CD. *Plan 9* has also inspired a 111-minute video documentary, *Flying Saucers Over Hollywood: The Plan 9 Companion*, John Woolley's meticulous recreation of the movie as a graphic novel, and a touring musical. (The most daring of recent Wood homages is Trent Harris' *Plan 10 from Outer Space*, an independent feature made in Salt Lake City which treats Mormon cosmology as the stuff of 50s sci-fi.)

Thanks to Burton, however, the Ed Wood story

makes the leap from cult to religion. By celebrating the career of so sodden a loser, *Ed Wood* may seem to be a travesty of the classic Hollywood biopic – a form which, disproportionately concerned with showbusiness personalities, peaked (numerically, if not aesthetically) during the same 50s that brought *Plan 9 from Outer Space* and now functions, in American popular culture, as an eternal theme park of national innocence. In fact, *Ed Wood* is as blatantly inspirational as any paean to Alexander Graham Bell or Al Jolson – a success story preaching the importance of self-belief and the power of positive thinking, demonstrating by its very existence the payoff for doing one's thing.

There's a moment in the film where an incredulous Hollywood producer, amazed by a private screening of *Glen or Glenda*, anachronistically proclaims that this grotesque melodrama has got to be a "put-on." That's exactly what they said of Van Gogh, schmuck. We always knew he was great – didn't we?

Burton is a Wood fan. (Like Joe Dante, who celebrated William Castle in his 1993 *Matinee*, he belongs to the *Famous Monsters of Filmdom* school of adolescent fetishes.) Written by Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski from *Nightmare of Ecstasy*, *Ed Wood* is nothing if not knowing. The movie opens with an extravagant pastiche of *Plan 9 from Outer Space* – tombstone credits illuminated by lightning, a crescendo of thunder yielding to mad bongo drums – and thereafter, there's scarcely an Ed Wood joke that isn't made. "Gosh, where's my pink sweater?" is his girlfriend's first line. "Why, if I had the chance, I could make half a movie out of this stock footage," the aspiring film-maker tells a friend.

Just as *Mystery Theater 3000*, a regular feature on American cable television's Comedy Central, inscribes an animated pair of wise-cracking humanoid spectators over the old drive-in movies presented, so Wood's contemporary incarnation is rigorously overdetermined. Depp plays the ►



In a previous life: Bela Lugosi in Wood's 'The Bride and the Monster', above; Johnny Depp as Wood, below

◀ director as a wide-eyed, wired enthusiast, suave but disjointed, lips accentuated by pencil-line moustache, teeth bared in a ventriloquist dummy's idiot grin, every word illuminated by faith in his own dream.

Depp aside, the movie's *typage* is remarkable: Jeffrey Jones's Criswell, Lisa Marie's Vampira, George "The Animal" Steele's Tor Johnson, Vincent D'Onofrio's Orson Welles are all impressively hyperreal, and Martin Landau's Lugosi is a good deal more. ("No one gives two fucks for Bela," Lugosi says sadly upon meeting avid fan Eddie Wood.) Thanks to Landau's performance, a mixture of wounded pride and agonised gratitude, *Ed Wood* is as much footnote to the Lugosi canon as it is celebration of Wood's. Condemned to self-parody, resurrected by the camera, Lugosi functions as the pure essence of negative stardom – he's a successful failure, Ed Wood's Ed Wood. Landau's Oscar proves it.

While skirting the sleaze and pathos of its subject's life, *Ed Wood* is heavily dependent on Wood's films. Burton in a sense naturalises the video doc *Look Back in Angora*, which used clips from the Wood oeuvre as the basis for a biography, while puzzling over the miracle of how

these sacred texts came to be created. The most thematically apposite sequence has Ed and his cast submitting to mass baptism (true story!) to secure the Baptist Church of Beverly Hills's backing for *Plan 9 from Outer Space*.

In the gospel according to Burton, Wood is so solicitous of his actors that he shoots every scene in one take; like Warhol, his mantra is "That was perfect." *Ed Wood*, of course, is absolutely flawless – as fastidiously crafted as any previous Burton production. (Columbia reportedly put it in turnaround because Burton refused to trade "first look" for the right to shoot in black and white.) The painstaking replication of Wood's haphazard compositions suggests another Hollywood landmark, the Buena Park Palace of Living Art where the Mona Lisa or Whistler's Mother are reproduced as garish wax dioramas and the Venus De Milo is improved upon: not only is she colorized, but her lost limbs are restored. *Ed Wood* is the Palace of Living Art in reverse. Art is not reproduced as kitsch; living kitsch is embalmed as art.

No less than its subject, albeit in a different way, *Ed Wood* is deeply solipsistic. For however ostensibly mediated by film or television, the

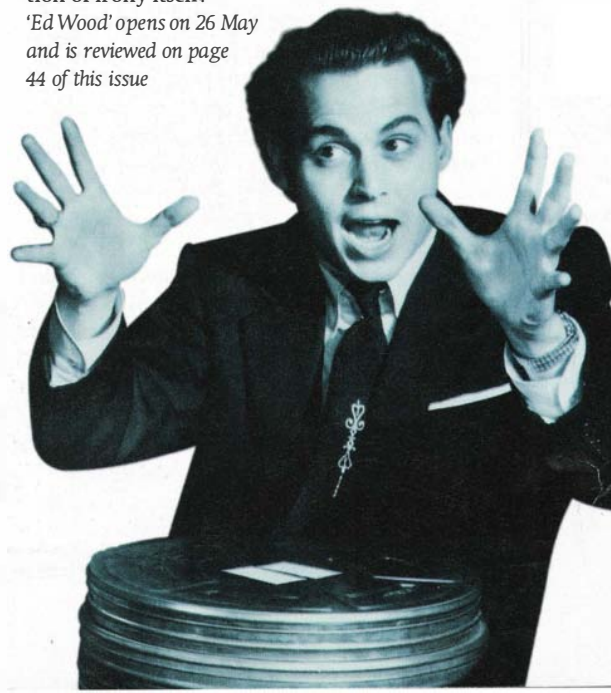
entire world is subsumed to the director's vision: everything is stippled with noir lighting and awash in studio rain, a lavish version of a cheap horror movie. The most elaborate gag involves the mechanism of an amusement-park spook house; the most powerful moment has Lugosi reprise his tormented speech from *Bride of the Monster* ("Home? I have no home!") on a Hollywood street corner; the most inspirational sequence allows Ed to meet his idol Orson Welles in a cheap bar and thus draw strength to finish his "masterpiece", *Plan 9 from Outer Space*.

Opening as it does in a movie movie-graveyard, Ed Wood evokes Hollywood as a mansion populated by unquiet ghosts, but it's a Hollywood haunted house just the same. Unlike *Look Back in Angora*, which includes footage documenting Wood's bloated descent into porn, Burton ends the story on a positive note. According to *Nightmare of Ecstasy*, *Plan 9* never enjoyed a Los Angeles theatrical release; in *Ed Wood*, it is accorded a gala premiere at the packed Pantages Theater. Recognised in the movies as he never was in life, the genius of *Plan 9* is feted by an ecstatically appreciative audience: us!

The circuit of self-congratulation is complete. "This is the one they'll remember me for!" Burton's prescient hero gushes at *Plan 9*'s imaginary premiere. If it seems inconceivable that Hollywood directors D. W. Griffith, Josef von Sternberg or even Orson Welles (to name only three) would ever be so canonised, it may be that their very presence would reproach the audience. But then *Ed Wood* is really a form of alternative film history. It's the aesthetic equivalent of those contemporary releases – *Forrest Gump*, *Nell*, *I.Q.*, *Dumb and Dumber*, *The Brady Bunch*, the upcoming *The Stupids* – in which simple minds are synonymous with appealing innocence and virtue is a factor of low intelligence.

Deliberately or not, Ed Wood served to deconstruct all manner of Hollywood pretence. *Ed Wood* builds it all back up, shiny and new. In the great American tradition, Ed Wood is born again, born to win. (The panic over *The Bell Curve* notwithstanding, dumbing down is democratic.) Let the lowest common denominator rule. Although the closing credits note that Tor Johnson achieved his "greatest fame as a bestselling Halloween mask", the movie's greatest irony is the liquidation of irony itself.

'Ed Wood' opens on 26 May and is reviewed on page 44 of this issue





THE INDEPENDENT

Young Film Journalist of the Year

Sight and Sound and *The Independent* are sponsoring, with Apple Computer UK Ltd, a competition to encourage young film writers.

The competition Entrants are invited to write a 1500 word review of any film released in Britain during April or May. The writer should convey the experience of watching the film, relate the visual language of the film and its content and show a knowledge of film generally. The judges are: Philip Dodd and Nick James of *Sight and Sound* and Sheila Johnston and John Lyttle of *The Independent*.

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ethan hawke julie delpy

A Richard Linklater film

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ESCAPE

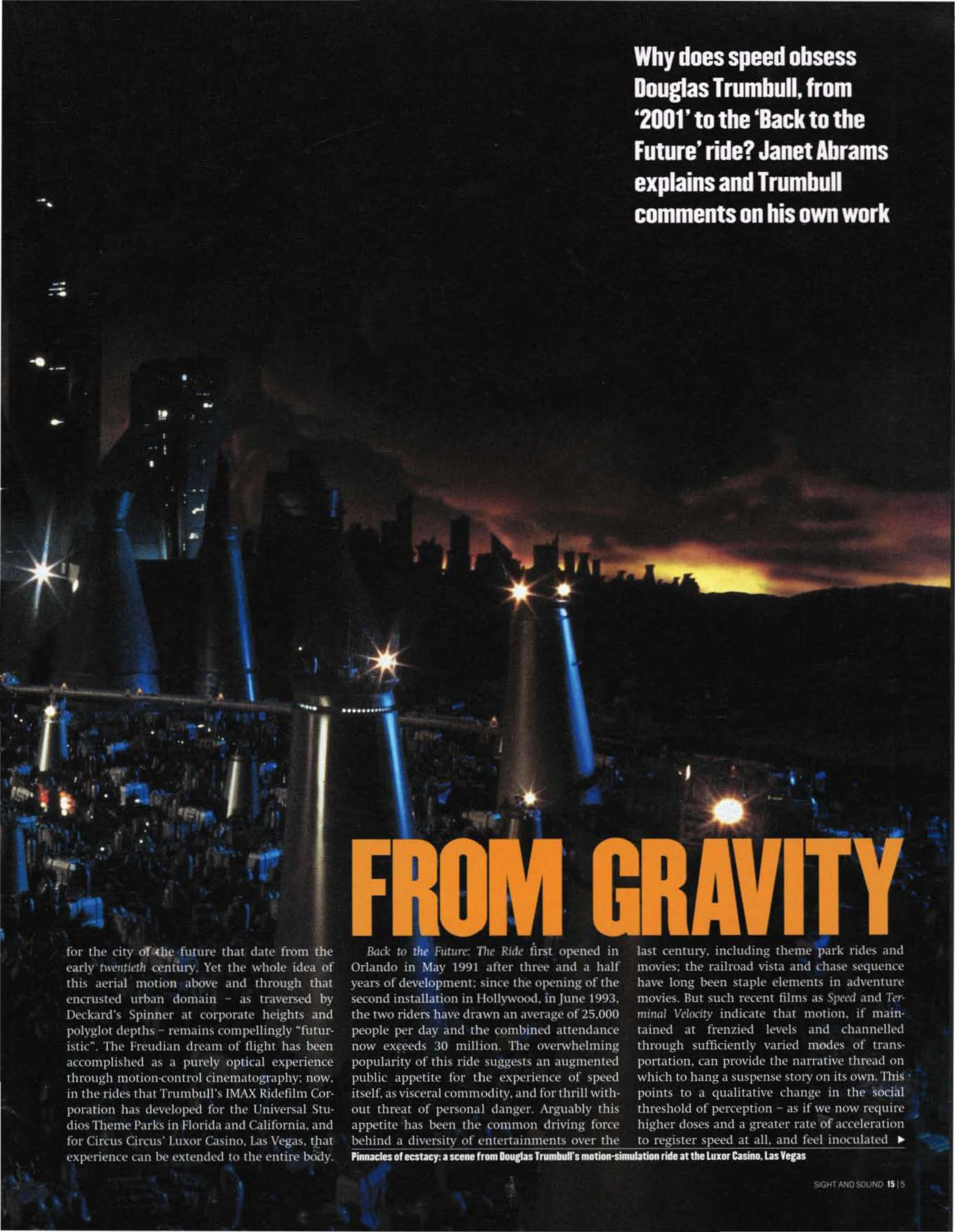


Best known for creating the special effects on such science fiction landmarks as *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, and *Blade Runner*, along with *Brainstorm*, which he directed, Douglas Trumbull has devoted his career to motion, as a route to utopia if not as utopia itself. He has consistently aimed to transport the cinema viewer into imaginary landscapes and infinite space, devising techniques and film formats that harness the sense of sight to the sensation of speed.

Ever since the hallucinogenic 'Stargate Sequence' in Stanley Kubrick's *2001*, Trumbull has been preoccupied with overcoming the lim-

iting condition of the cinema screen, as if, with enough acceleration, the audience could actually be propelled across this spectatorial boundary, and the spatio-temporal distinction between "what lies ahead" and "the future" might finally be collapsed. Just how much speed does it take? This is the question underlying his film work and, more recently, the motion-simulation rides which employ electronic representation technology to convey the roller-coaster rush of early cinema, and which also recall its antecedents, such primitive 'virtual realities' as painted dioramas and turn-of-the-century mechanical rides to exotic destina-

tions and faked natural disasters. Whether the vehicle in question is man-made and headed into outer space (*2001*, *Silent Running*), alien and headed down to earth (the Mother Ship in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*), an LAPD vertical take-off prototype (Deckard's Spinner, a quasi-helicopter, in *Blade Runner*) or a real-life car-of-the-future that simply didn't fly (the DeLorean at the heart of *Back to the Future: The Ride*), the subtext of Trumbull's work is the desire to escape from gravity. The architecture of *Blade Runner*'s begrimed and retrofitted Los Angeles of the early twenty-first century may be curiously nostalgic, with references to visionary designs



Why does speed obsess
Douglas Trumbull, from
'2001' to the 'Back to the
Future' ride? Janet Abrams
explains and Trumbull
comments on his own work

FROM GRAVITY

for the city of the future that date from the early twentieth century. Yet the whole idea of this aerial motion above and through that encrusted urban domain – as traversed by Deckard's Spinner at corporate heights and polyglot depths – remains compellingly "futuristic". The Freudian dream of flight has been accomplished as a purely optical experience through motion-control cinematography; now, in the rides that Trumbull's IMAX Ridefilm Corporation has developed for the Universal Studios Theme Parks in Florida and California, and for Circus Circus' Luxor Casino, Las Vegas, that experience can be extended to the entire body.

Back to the Future: The Ride first opened in Orlando in May 1991 after three and a half years of development; since the opening of the second installation in Hollywood, in June 1993, the two riders have drawn an average of 25,000 people per day and the combined attendance now exceeds 30 million. The overwhelming popularity of this ride suggests an augmented public appetite for the experience of speed itself, as visceral commodity, and for thrill without threat of personal danger. Arguably this appetite has been the common driving force behind a diversity of entertainments over the

last century, including theme park rides and movies; the railroad vista and chase sequence have long been staple elements in adventure movies. But such recent films as *Speed* and *Terminal Velocity* indicate that motion, if maintained at frenzied levels and channelled through sufficiently varied modes of transportation, can provide the narrative thread on which to hang a suspense story on its own. This points to a qualitative change in the social threshold of perception – as if we now require higher doses and a greater rate of acceleration to register speed at all, and feel inoculated ►

Pinnacles of ecstasy: a scene from Douglas Trumbull's motion-simulation ride at the Luxor Casino, Las Vegas

TYRELL BUILDING: APPROACH

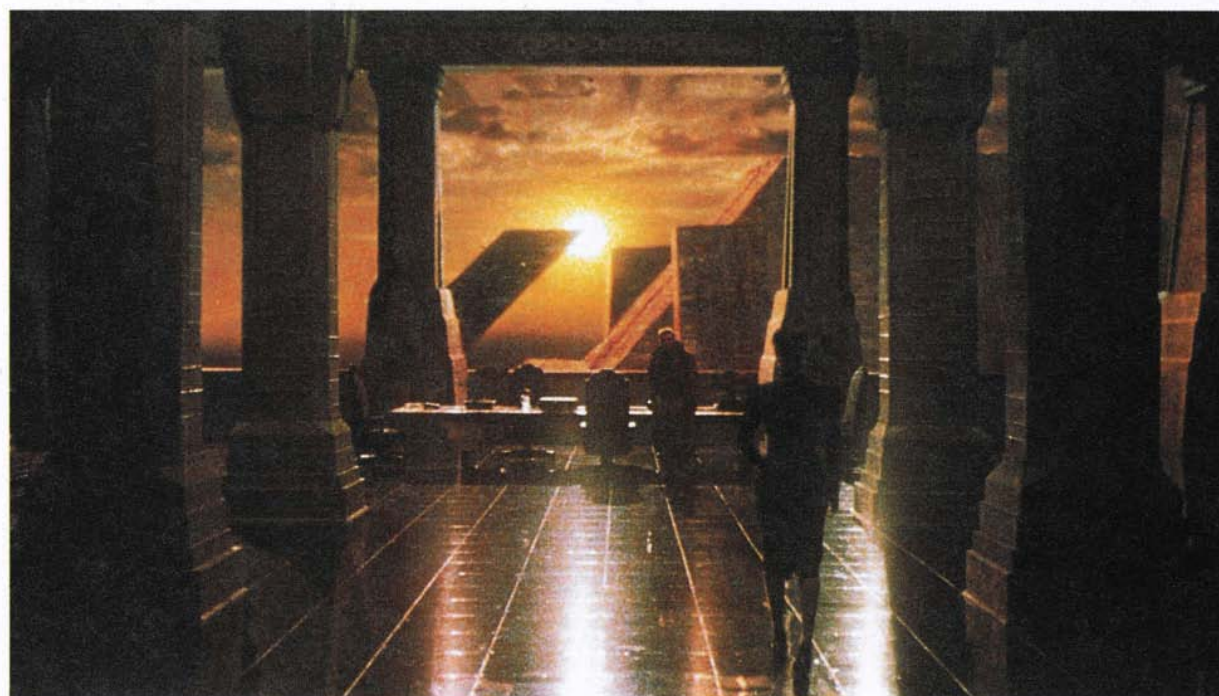
I proposed to Ridley Scott that the Tyrell Building be a sort of Mayan pyramid with Art Deco detail. We didn't have much money to build models, so we kept flipping them around. We only built one pyramid and it only had two sides; it was about six feet wide at the base and two at the top. We shot it two ways and then composited them together. This scene is actually comprised of six different optical elements; the building on the left, the building on the right, the lens flare, the vehicle itself, the sky and the distant horizon. Each element is shot

individually on colour negative, then processed, screened and checked for focus and movement. Then we make an inter-positive as well as a matte of each element. For instance, a piece of white card would be placed behind the pyramid to create an edge, and we'd shoot the matte on a separate piece of film using exactly the same motion – that's why motion control is so important. Deckard's Spinner is actually not moving at all: it's just a miniature mounted on a rod from behind. The camera is on a motion-control rig, so it can pan, tilt and track in and

out relative to the Spinner. The Spinner alone requires several exposures: in addition to the lens flare, which happens in the camera, there are four separate exposures: the Spinner's surface, illuminated with off-camera lights; the inboard lights; the very bright lights coming off its top that expand beyond the vehicle; and the Spinner body, shot as a silhouette, to produce a matte. A combination of maybe 30 different lights, inside and out, are used to create the reflective sheen on the Tyrell pyramid.



RONALD GRANT

**TYRELL BUILDING: INSIDE**

The upper part of the window and the column tops are a matte painting. The background was a retouched photomontage front-projected onto a large screen. The sun was added at the very end, as a separate exposure. When the actors walk in front of the sun we had to roto-scope them. We replaced the sun matte painting with a very bright light, behind a hole on the animation stand, and hand-painted a little black mask so that the actor would appear to be blocking the light for a moment, but you'd get a natural lens flare as though ten stops overexposed, creating a big halo.

◀ against the risk of technological catastrophe which such speed implicitly portends.

As Wolfgang Schivelbusch has observed in his study of early rail travel, *The Railway Journey*, the cultural response, in the nineteenth century, to this new form of accelerated motion, was a kind of trauma analogous to industrial fatigue, likened by contemporary medical experts to the "shock" of battle; the elaborate upholstery of railways carriages was a conspicuous attempt to alleviate both the physical and psychological symptoms of this trauma:

"One of the essential new stimuli of the train journey is its speed, which expresses itself as dispersed perception of foreground objects, as the feeling of the annihilation of space and time. This new stimulus at first merely irritates the traveller, who is still accustomed to the old velocity of the coach. Yet gradually everything connected with the new velocity becomes psy-

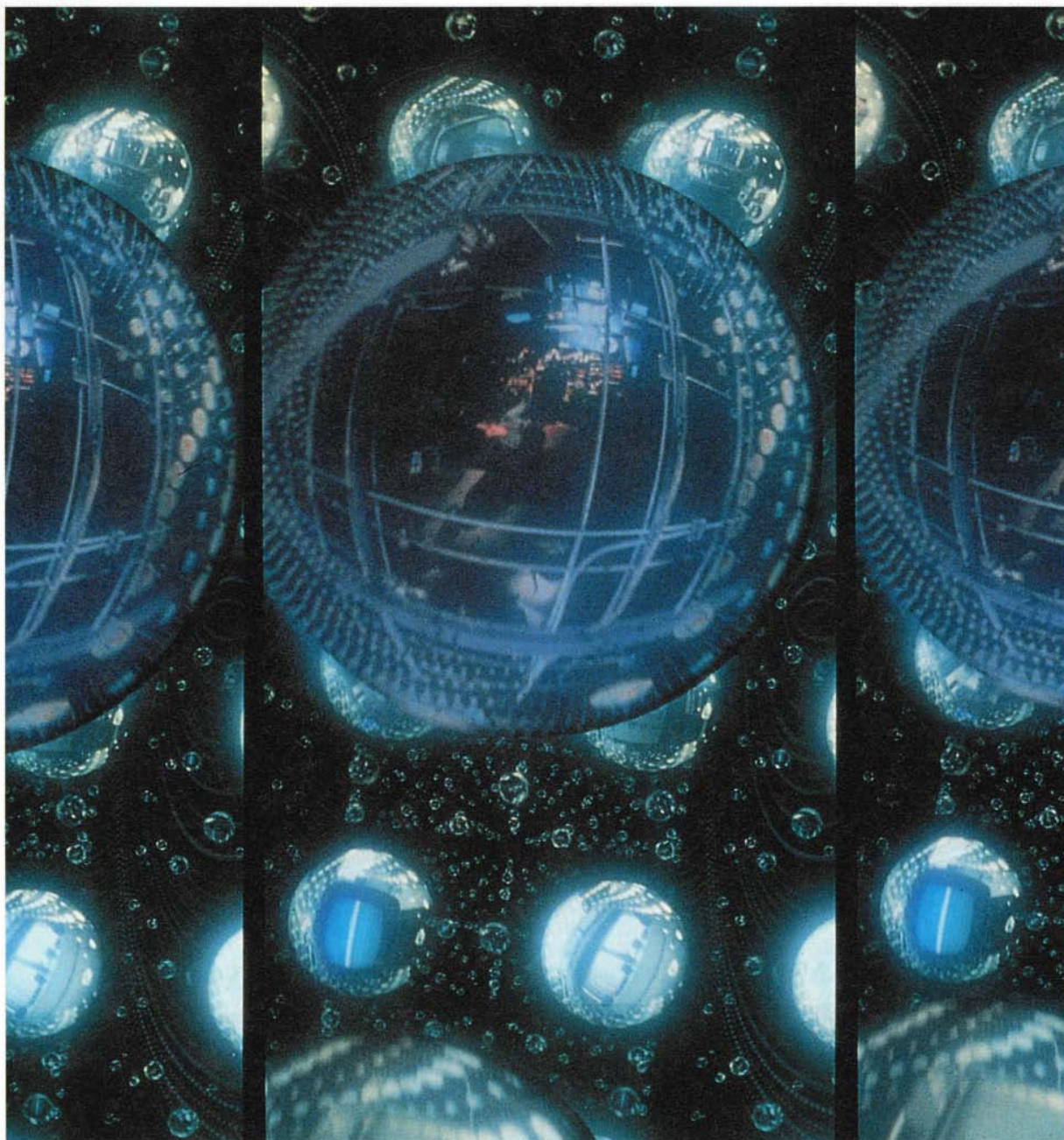
chically assimilated." Schivelbusch argues that the development of "panoramic vision" was a significant part of this psychic adaptation; by the late nineteenth century the train traveller had adopted forms of behaviour – such as reading on board – that would have been unmanageable for the early traveller because "the journey still is, for him, a space-time adventure that engages his entire sensorium."

In a curious reversal of the earlier situation, late twentieth-century travel has effectively been stripped of any such sense of adventure, and indeed is almost devoid of physical motion. We have become accustomed to the plane journey as a period of enforced stasis, strapped into regimented rows of seats, while the journey's primary "view" is the in-flight movie. Inside this cylinder, the only real gauge of movement comes from the "soundtrack" of the engines, and any untoward turbulence that may inter-

vene to remind us of the oddity of floating – or hurtling – through air at high altitude.

This very denaturing of velocity has perhaps stimulated some of the craving for artificial reenactments of the "annihilation of space and time" that early rail passengers encountered. Motion-simulation rides once again "engage the entire sensorium", and thoroughly disrupt the viewer's sense of space and time by synchronising the hydraulics of a seating platform with the kinetics of motion-control film. In these rides, the nineteenth-century railway traveller's "panoramic vision" has its counterpart in Omnimax cinematography, projected with a fisheye lens onto a spherical screen – the surrogate carriage window.

Trumbull's Luxor ride entitled *In Search of the Obelisk* offers a fairly dazzling (and deafening) illustration of the late twentieth-century genre of "immersive" entertainment. It is the first



MEMORY BUBBLES

While we were shooting the film I was anticipating all these memory bubble sequences. So we had a 35mm camera with a fisheye lens on it standing by, alongside the main unit, to grab shots simultaneously with the main unit, of images we knew would need to be in the memory bubbles. So there were thousands of feet of that. There were also a lot of still photographs in the memory bubbles; they weren't all moving; it was only the foreground ones that were moving. The memory bubble photography was extremely complicated: it was shot on a motion control rig called COMPSY, computerised multiplane camera system. This was about the most sophisticated motion-control camera my partner Dick Yuricich and I built. Some of those scenes had virtually hundreds of exposures on each frame of movie film; it was the same technique I used at the end of the film for the angelic, god, infinity sequences, and some of those were over 750 exposures on each frame of film. It was horrendous. That was the peak of that kind of photography. These days we would do it with computer graphics, much more quickly.

of a trio of attractions that opened at the casino/hotel in October 1993; they are conceived as a prototype that could fit in a shopping mall or other urban venue, rather than at the theme parks and World's Fairs which have until now been the primary locations of such non-conventional film presentation.

You enter the motion base, sit down in one of 16 high-backed seats moulded to resemble those in fancy racing cars, fasten your safety belt and pretend that you feel confident about what's going to happen next. The lights go down. Suddenly there's a jolt, you reach instinctively for the sides of your seat, and for the next four minutes you feel like a solitary sock in a demented spin dryer.

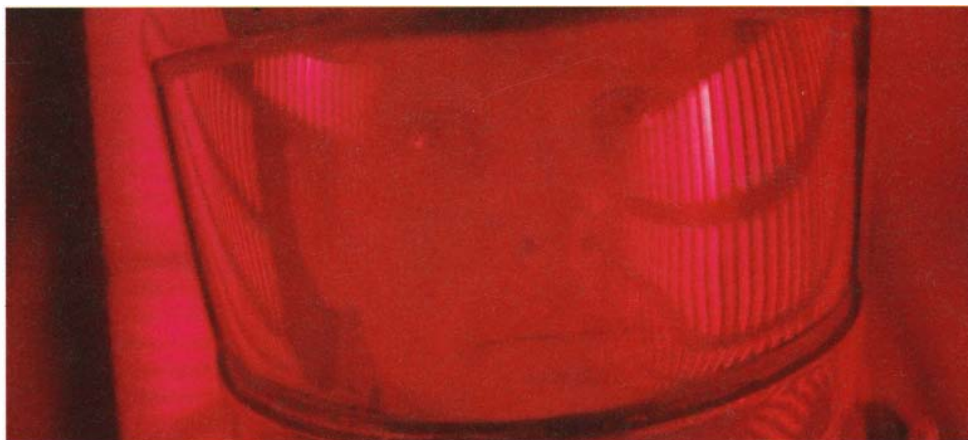
Centre-screen, a man on some kind of space-moped is careening through a forest of crystalline obelisks; you follow, as if riding pillion, as he veers over precipices and around sharp

corners, narrowly avoiding collision with looming obstacles and other flying contraptions. When he lurches, you lurch; when he jolts back, you hurtle sickeningly hard in the same direction. Looking over his shoulder, he purports to catch sight of his unexpected payload, then proceeds to yell out warnings to his passengers as the journey spirals through increasingly turbulent terrain, a giddy vortex of stalactites that's part pyramid, part Piranesi. The sound is enveloping, the visual landscape kaleidoscopic.

Trumbull disparages much other work in the simulation business for having "headed down the path of cheap commercialisation. Mounting the camera on the front of a dune buggy or a jet ski, to get nothing but the rush of speed, may be OK for a carnival environment, but it's not cinema as far as I'm concerned." What differentiates Ridefilm motion-simulation rides from mere carnival rides, he claims,

is drama. "There's dialogue, character development, suspense – all the normal cinematic elements. But it's not somebody else who's getting shot at or catapulted out of a rocket. It's you. This is what I'm most interested in: the direct first-person experience."

Thus the Luxor ride places each spectator, as it were, *inside* Dave's cockpit in 2001; the feeling of disorientation that the viewer registers, empathetically, on actor Keir Dullea's face in the Stargate Sequence counter-shots, now becomes their own. The role of the cockpit is significant, or rather, the absence of such a definitive enclosure is crucial to the commercial viability of the Ridefilm module. Whereas in *Back to the Future: The Ride* viewers are seated inside a DeLorean car, in the Luxor ride the vehicle is shorn of its roof, strangely denuded, or half-evolved like a funfair carousel minus its colourful turret. This partial characterisa- ►



POD SEQUENCES

In some of these, when Keir Dullea has his helmet on, you're seeing the reflections of off-screen 16mm films, as well as all the lights and instrumentation and the HAL readouts inside the Pod. In the sequence when he's being locked outside, and doesn't have his helmet on, some films are being projected on to his face. It makes no sense, but it looks great.



STARGATE SEQUENCE

I'd met the experimental film-maker John Whitney, so I had some idea about his technique of making many exposures onto a single frame of film, automatically. John was working on a device for moving a slit across a film frame, and moving artwork behind the slit, to create

patterns and textures and things. I never actually saw this thing; I just had a picture in my mind. But it occurred to me that if you could do that flat, you could do it three-dimensionally as well. After an experiment, I walked across the studio to Kubrick's office and said, "I'm going to need to build

a machine as big as a house, with tracks and motors, and big pieces of glass to scale this whole thing up." He said, "I think you're right. Do it, get it, whatever you need." The pieces of artwork were on kodalith transparencies about four or five feet tall by 10 or 12 feet long; hundreds of patterns from Op Art

books; strange grids out of 'Scientific American' magazine; electron microscope photographs blown up high contrast and reversed; lots of things I drew. Very strange patterns, plus coloured gels, mounted together on a huge light table. The camera was mounted on a track,

moving in one direction, while the artwork was moving behind the slit in another. There's the sense of plunging into a space that has infinite depth. There was no name for this procedure, because it had never been done before. I called it Slitscan. I don't know what Whitney called it.



BACK TO THE FUTURE: RIGHT

This is a miniature DeLorean car flying into a miniature dinosaur. The car is actually about a foot high, hanging on wires. The dinosaur was a 29-channel digitally controlled robot, about nine feet high. Everything was scaled to facilitate the pivotal scene where the car goes into the dinosaur's mouth, using a specially made 5" by 15" camera.

tion avoids foreclosure on what can be told: the appropriate vehicle interior can be "completed" via on-screen projection. Environment changes as a function of the film being screened; cockpit hardware rematerialises as computer software.

As an industrial object that occupies resolutely earthbound real space, the Ridefilm motion base is fascinating in its sheer hybrid awkwardness: part flying carpet, part fantasy conveyance and (mostly) cumbersome contraption. Styling is reserved for the seats and their immediate surround, but the anchoring undercroft – the criss-cross lacing of hydraulic rams, valves and metal beams that actually makes the whole platform move in x, y and z axes – can be clearly seen as the "working parts" by departing punters. Like gigantic bedsprings under a vast mattress, this heavy structure is left uncoiled, perhaps with the intention of arousing

the kind of awe that the dynamo inspired in Henry Adams at the 1900 Paris Exposition. But such admiration is pure nostalgic displacement, since the true "mechanism" of the ride is now embodied in digital code on Silicon Graphics computers; the motion-base armature is merely its robotic extension. (The "narrative" of the ride appears on the ride-operator's control screen as a graphical display like a musical score or electrocardiogram, a visual abstraction that condenses two kinds of movement, actual and recorded.)

One of the more obvious features of ride-simulators is their disruption of one's sense of time: a mere few minutes seems to expand to a different order of duration – compensation for the eternity spent queuing up for the eventual thrill. One "pays" for the short burst of intense motion with a *longue durée* of stasis. Though physically often banal and about as architec-

turally distinguished as jetways to planes, with which they bear a functional kinship, these queuing spaces (as any visitor to Disneyland knows) are far from neutral. Calibrated into successive zones of different duration, they are characterised by contextual props and a profusion of overhead monitors on which video interviews with cast members and other phoney "backstage" information is relayed. In *Back to the Future: The Ride*, these spaces are used to reintroduce the characters from this trilogy of films that most visitors have seen, and to establish the plot for the ride. Five stages precede the ride itself: the Main Queue Line (45 minutes), the Lobby queue (30 minutes), Pre-Show (six minutes), Holding Room (six minutes) and, finally, Vehicle Garage (the payoff, six minutes).

Carefully modulated storytelling is required in order to ensure that the narrative doesn't overwhelm the effects, and thus dampen the



THE TRUMBULL CO. INC.

LUXOR: PYRAMIDS

We created the Luxor ride in 18 months: a real crash program. Many of the scenes are mostly models with some computer graphics added, but this scene, where we're entering one of the underground pyramids, is entirely computer-generated. It would be virtually impossible to do as a miniature. Whatever the shortcomings in the images, in terms of colour and so on, the fluid could be moving, and there could be reflection, and self-matted things. Every pyramid is undulating while vehicles fly among them. We felt the potential of computer graphics was just passing some critical feasibility point at that moment.



THE TRUMBULL CO. INC.

LUXOR: CRYPTO EGYPT

This is a live action full-scale set piece, foreground, with two actors having a fight. The background is a miniature, and the whole thing is digitally composited. There's a moment in the simulation ride where we have several vehicles flying through a completely computer-generated environment, and there are rockets flying around leaving con trails. That's when the computer really got bogged down: dealing with reflection mapping, texture mapping, multiple vehicles, and trying to compute how much opacity there is through the smoke of the con trails. We go to the point where this giant IBM Power Visualisation Computer could only

manufacture 12 frames a day. That's two hours of computing-time per frame. We had to write a lot of special code to link up the Wavefront computer to the IBM PVC, and also to create the fish-eye view, which is then projected onto a hemispherical screen. The computer actually has to warp the image. The Luxor's orthogonal motion base allows you to keep the audience together, because if you rolled or pitched, you would disconnect from the screen: the person sitting in the left seat would be moving up while the person in the right seat is moving down. In the film you're seeing a certain kind of motion – diving over a cliff or turning right, or

whatever – and everybody on the motion base must feel the same thing. One of the things about a simulation experience is that you not only have to feel the dynamic motion of flying or turning, but also very subtle motion: vibrations. If you were driving down Broadway, you would feel the texture of pitted asphalt plus potholes: a series of very subtle vibrations. We record that as a sound wave, and put it directly into the servo-electronic system that operates the valves controlling the flow of hydraulic fluid into the hydraulic rams. So we can create a physical sensation of sound. This is a process we've patented, called a "high-frequency injection".

potential for repeat visits. "You can kill the fun of the ride by telling too strong a story that you don't want to hear again," Trumbull explains. "A direct experience is similar to listening to music. You can have it multiple times without any degradation or loss of interest." Whereas movies have a theatrical lifespan, on first release, of only a few weeks, rides are a more durable form of entertainment. "A ride may have a market life of ten years. It takes on some of the qualities of *CATS* or *Phantom of the Opera*."

Trumbull has long been interested in how cinema could change people's physical behaviour. In the early 1970s, while developing the Showscan process (a method of photographing and projecting film at 60 frames per second), he found that a dramatic increase in frame-rate produced corresponding increases in a viewer's heart rate, galvanic skin response, respiration level and electro-encephalogram.

The physiological effects may be understood but the psychological ramifications are less certain. "There's a tremendous appetite for altered states," Trumbull asserts, quickly modifying the remark. "For socially acceptable altered states." When he talks of motion-simulation rides as "having the potential to offer profound transformational experiences... to modify the way people feel and behave," he surely intends to imply the kind of spiritual transcendence that has always been an undercurrent of his work.

But the focus on the technology necessary to produce such brief interludes of otherness diverts us from a more elusive question: what is The Ride and where does it lead us? Is it a quest to be ejected from our normal, grounded bodily selves, and then brought back? What does it mean to take a seat – whether in the plush of the cinema, or the seat-belt secured rows of the jetplane, or the vibrating platform of the

motion-simulation ride – and submit to a journey whose destination is anticipated but ultimately indeterminate? Motion-simulation rides, for all their vaunted "modernity" may be closer than we might think to the mechanical rides which emerged in parallel with the railway. Those rides sought to domesticate the "shock" of emerging industrial culture by mimicking its routine, and re-enacting its physical and psychological disturbances under safely-contained circumstances. Contemporary rides could be seen as the equivalent for an age in which information technologies are vaunted as conduits to another kind of sublime yet amorphous landscape: the abyss of infinite data. As the primacy of the physical body in real space yields to the miasma of free-floating minds in cyberspace, perhaps these cinematic diversions offer short, sharp shocks that shake us from our post-industrial fatigue.

● In 1989, Richard Linklater met a woman in a toyshop in Philadelphia. They walked around the city together, conversing intimately, deep into the night. For Linklater, the only thing holding him back from complete immersion in this brief encounter was the nagging suspicion that it "could be a movie". Now it is. *Before Sunrise* shares the less-than-24-hour timespan of his two previous films. But whereas Linklater's groundbreaking mid-20s lifestyle epic *Slacker* (1991) could boast not far short of a hundred characters, and his hazy but perspicacious high-school memoir *Dazed and Confused* (1993) had between 20 and 30, *Before Sunrise* puts just two characters "under a microscope to see what would happen".

Set in Vienna, which Linklater describes as being "a lot like Austin – full of smart people in coffee shops at a loss for what to do next," *Before Sunrise* pursues his theme of roads not taken. Jesse – a rangy American Euro-railer, played by Ethan Hawke – persuades Julie Delpy's smart French student Céline to get off a train with him on the grounds that this will forestall the moment in 20 years time when she will wonder what might have happened if she had. With the same capriciousness that led it to constantly hare off to meet new people in *Slacker*, Linklater's camera opts to stay with them, even when potential distractions – an arguing couple on the train, a German avant-garde theatre troupe – seem to offer more in the way of dramatic reward.

Slowing down the traditionally accelerated screen romance to something which at least feels like real time proves to be a productive device, allowing compelling ambiguities to open up, not only in the characters' relationship with each other but also in the audience's relationship with the actors who play them and the genre they inhabit. A series of romantic set-pieces – a chance initial meeting, subsequent encounters with a gypsy palm-reader or a street poet – prove to be not quite as set as might have been imagined. When Céline and Jesse part, the camera revisits all the places they have been, and finds them diminished by their absence.

Before Sunrise opened the Sundance festival, confirming Linklater's standing as a leading American independent film-maker, even though this film is actually – like its predecessor *Dazed and Confused* – a studio presentation (the studios being, respectively, a supportive and hands-off Castle Rock and a somewhat less sympathetic Universal). From the voice of Generation X to the Texan Eric Rohmer, the conventional wisdoms about Linklater do scant justice to the distinctiveness of his work. He is habitually discussed in terms of disconnection and disengagement, but it is for connecting and engaging that he should be most celebrated. Cinematically self-educated (excepting a term at a community college film history course: "they'd ask for two-page assignments, I'd deliver eight") Linklater founded and is still artistic director of the nine-year-old Austin film society. His life's work is "trying to serve the movie-making process in ways that aren't being done much," and straight after this interview he was jetting off to Berlin to collect a Silver Bear.



What kind of teen movies does Richard Linklater like? And what drives his own distinctive films, from 'Slacker' to the new 'Before Sunrise'? He talks with Ben Thompson

THE FIRST KISS

Thompson: Do you think not having any formal training helped you to find your own cinematic voice more easily?

Linklater: It's hard to say why you do stuff, but I think my instinct in not going to film school was basically that I didn't want anyone telling me what to do. It's that authority thing – some teacher saying [assumes ridiculous quavery voice] "Where's the close up of the hands?" Or, "This story won't work, there's no dramatic tension." "This story won't work, there's no dramatic tension," would have caused a few problems for 'Slacker'.

Exactly. I would never have been able even to conceive of that movie if I had been in some programme whose job was to churn out people for the industry. And also I guess I was just too shy – I didn't want to make films before I was ready. **You worked on offshore oil rigs for a couple of years. Was it your ambition to make films even then?**

It kind of came about during that period. Because we worked out in the Gulf of Mexico, when I was on land I had a lot of time. At that point I was mostly interested in writing and reading, but when I was ashore I began seeing two or three films a day at least. I was living in Houston which still had a big repertory theatre which had double features: *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *Citizen Kane*, *Badlands* and *Days of Heaven*. I had this book, *The Technical Aspects of Film-Making*. It sat on my shelf. I'd look at it every

day and think, "Some day I'm gonna open that." **It must have been frustrating going back on the rig.**

Not really, because I would just read. At sea it was all literature – Dostoevsky, whatever – but on land it was all film.

Was there a corresponding conflict for you between ambitions to write or become a film-maker?

I think I wanted to be a writer at first – growing up in Texas that seemed the only option, though I played music a little bit too. It took me a while, and seeing a lot of movies, to realise that I wasn't really a writer: I had a visual thing, I could see films in my head, and cinema is really my calling. If I couldn't make films anymore I would try and get them seen, or write about them, or own a theatre, something like that – I think of it as all the same anyway.

How did you set about training yourself to make films?

My off-shore period should have been my second two years of college, so by the time I was 22 I had all this money saved up. I moved to Austin and brought a Super-8 camera, a projector and some editing equipment, and started studying that book. A lot of film-making – the finer points of lighting for example – is a real craft which it takes years to perfect, but the basic stuff is easy. Anyone can set some lights and shoot a scene. And I found I loved the technical aspects of it: I would blacken my windows and

Beginnings and endings: Julie Delpy and Ethan Hawke as the chance lovers in Linklater's 'Before Sunrise', above

edit some film I just shot for 24 hours straight. I spent several years doing shorts which were really just technical experiments. Looking back I'm amazed at how methodical I was – I would do a whole film just to work on a different lighting technique. I knew it was important not to try to say anything in my first couple of years, as I would probably get really frustrated and quit, because I wouldn't have the formal skill to achieve that thought. Finally, as a kind of culmination of all this work, I did an 89 minute Super-8 feature.

What was it called?

It's Impossible to Learn to Plow by Reading Books. I spent two years on it: shooting for a year and editing for a year – I've never had that schedule since [laughs].

Has it ever been shown?

We had a little film festival in Austin recently, where I showed it for the first time. A lot of people say it's their favourite film of mine, but it's so personal it's kind of painful to watch.

What is the film about?

It's kind of a prequel to *Slacker* and a forerunner of *Before Sunrise*, in that it's actually all about the mind-set of travel. It's about a trip around the US on Amtrak: more than half the film takes place on a train, the rest is just getting off in a town and walking around. It's like one guy – me – I would put the camera on trip, push the button, then go and be in the scene. It's very for-

It's a neat irony that something which starts out as a rejection of life lived as a marketing category should then become a marketing category in itself – a means of selling stuff to all these kids that don't want to be part of a capitalist process!

I know, I know. It's a really evil circle. I think that's why I didn't want to get into that whole thought too much, because it's my worst nightmare. People look at the characters in *Slacker* and ask what's wrong with them? They're white, semi-middle-class kids – what have they got to complain about? And I say well, it's kind of a malaise in this culture where the enemy, the idea that money is everything and we should all capitalise on the new trend, is so subterranean, so entirely in all of us. I think that's what they're complaining about: they're complaining about what's going to happen to them before it's even a deal!

So with 'Dazed and Confused', did you have a sense of trying to supply historical perspective?

That was really important, because I don't think people have changed, which is why all this generational talk is ultimately ridiculous. It's just demographics: you have to make people feel special when you're trying to sell them stuff. No one's going to get anywhere saying, "You know, people don't really change that much." People were like this in the 70s too, and probably even in the 50s. It's only the drugs that changed. So there was definitely an idea of a continuum

to make a film that captured the energy of what I remember: driving around, not much happening but everything happening at once. It was fun to be in a genre that I knew pretty well – there are a lot of good high-school movies too. **What sort do you like?**

My favourite ones are really the edge movies, *Over the Edge*, *River's Edge*. I like *If...* a lot – the true way to end a teenage movie is complete apocalypse, whether it's imagined or real. Like in *Over the Edge*, they're fire-bombing the school – that's the ultimate teen thing.

'Dazed and Confused' ends more on a plateau though. My movie's a little more ambiguous I guess. It just wasn't a good enough set-up: the oppressive force wasn't so clearly defined.

What was the oppressive force? Not Aerosmith, surely? Just being a teenager: having to have parents, having to have teachers, having to live in a shitty town – it's bad enough.

Are you worried that you might have made this generation's 'Animal House'?

If I have, I didn't mean to! There are teenagers who've seen *Dazed and Confused* 50 times and have parties to it. They all think the 70s were a great time, even though there is plenty of evidence to the contrary in the film.

Were the two characters in 'Before Sunrise' set in stone in your mind before you knew who would play them?

I had a script, and there were two people I was looking for, but I wasn't really aware of who until I found them. If say an American woman and an Italian man had been right then it could have easily swapped over. It was always vague. It was the same with the city.

Once you'd settled on Vienna, did you have to work hard to avoid homages to 'The Third Man'?

Well, we did film on a Ferris wheel, but only because it was the sort of touristic – I love that word – thing the two characters would do.

I like the way the film's structure echoes the trajectory of their relationship: it's as if the characters are deciding when and how to move things on.

The film's only agenda is to go onto the next interaction – all it propels you to is the next thing. The fact is they won't know until they're apart how much they really care about each other. We all create these romantic ideals, even if they don't exist. It's kind of an endearing thing about the species that we do that.

There's an unusually forthright quote in the production notes. Julie Delpy says, "I knew unless I was tough with these two American men, Céline could have possibly disappeared into some cliché-ridden feminine mass." Then there's the line in the film where she describes the scenario as being "like a male fantasy: meet a French girl on a train, fuck her and never see her again." Was it this that led you to seek out a female co-writer [Kim Krizan, 'Cynic Questions Happiness' in 'Slacker' and the teacher in 'Dazed and Confused' who says, "The 1968 democratic convention was probably the most bitchin' time of my entire life"] for 'Before Sunrise'?

I certainly thought that since the film is so much a dialogue between a man and a woman, it was important to have a strong woman co-writer and a strong woman in the production. But I feel equally close to both characters – I think a lot of me actually goes through Julie. **'Slacker' was very much a shot in the dark, but with a high-school comedy and now a romance, you seem to** ▶

TAKES SO LONG

mal, the camera never moves, but there's hardly any dialogue in the whole movie, and what there is is just kind of mumbling because the microphone is at a distance. In a way it's the opposite of *Slacker*, where everybody says exactly what is going on inside their heads.

In all your films there seems to be a very exact sense of history, in terms of both your own personal place in it and observing things culturally with a high degree of accuracy. It must have been very galling for you to have 'Slacker' so widely thought of as the epitome of something that it wasn't.

You have to make your peace with a film when you finish it, as whatever happens to it then is beyond your control, but it has been a little irritating. I have found myself somewhat detached from the whole Generation X/Slacker conversation – kind of bemused by it. President Clinton is using the word! He did this graduate address at UCLA and he was saying "I don't think you're a generation of slackers, I think you're a generation of seekers," but to me that's what slackers were: seekers. All these people in the film had their own projects going – the guy's JFK assassination book, or the woman's menstrual cycle sculpture – but they were outside the consumer culture. That's the cardinal sin: not basing your life around working or buying things. And it does bother me when people who should know better project negativity onto that.

with *Slacker*. *Dazed and Confused* is set in 1976 – the hair is long, the music is kind of the same. **It's funny that people were rebelling against that whole FM rock thing then, and now it sounds great.**

Right. It was all, "What is this corporate garbage they're shoving down our throats!" Retrospectively, I found an energy there, and I used that to drive the movie. That's the major character in the movie – the music.

How did you make that work? Did you plot the soundtrack as you plotted the film?

Sometimes, yes. It was very intuitive: I'd wake up every morning with a new idea of what song would work where. About half of them I had before shooting began, and the other half came as it went along. I knew it would open with 'Sweet Emotion'; 'Hurricane' would be when they walked into the pool hall; and when Mitch was getting spanked it would be 'No More Mr Nice Guy'. I liked the irony of the lyrics, even if some of them – 'School's Out', for example – are a bit obvious.

That's how it should be though, isn't it? You don't get many teenagers saying "I'm not going to like that song – its relevance to my life is too readily apparent." I suppose it's the same with films. Presumably in making 'Dazed and Confused' you gave the odd thought to the proud heritage of bad high-school movies?

It was probably seeing all of them that made me think I had a teenage movie to make. I wanted

◀ be picking out ever better-ploughed furrows. Isn't charted territory more perilous than uncharted?

It kind of is, but at the same time it's kind of neat. It's like going into an old goldmine with a new process. I can't say that I'm a big fan of the genre *Before Sunrise* might be said to belong to, but these films answer a huge need in people, and I was wondering if I could still answer that need, but with my own interpretation of how things really are. I think that what throws people about the film is that the first kiss takes so long: they're used to it being couple meets/couple immediately all over each other in bed/now we can get on with the story.

There's a scene I really like where they're in a record shop listening booth, listening to some awful romantic song, and you can see Hawke's character thinking, "Am I corny enough to take advantage of this, or should I respect how bad a song it is?"

Right. In most films they would have kissed there, but no one wants to make the first move, so there's that wonderful awkwardness. That's how life is, but you don't tend to see it that much in the movies.

Can you imagine making a film not compressed within a 24-hour timespan?

The next one covers about 85 years! It's a true story, based on an oral history (Claude Stanush's *The Newton Boys - Portrait of an Outlaw Gang*) of these four 1920s Texas share-croppers who become bank robbers. It'll obviously be much more epic in structure, but I hope it'll have the same feel of hanging out with these guys in the moment. Epic story-telling can be really distancing and boring; there's this strange idea that things become grander the further you go back, but I really want to show the 20s as I imagine they might have been.

All your films seem to have a strong autobiographical element, but presumably you didn't rob that many banks in the 20s, so this must be a bit of a leap.

Not really, because I've always found it is very easy to think of myself as a criminal. I don't know what I would have done had I not been a film-maker, but I wouldn't have had any trouble justifying crime in my mind. So on the surface it looks like a complete departure, and it is in a certain way, but in another it isn't. *Before Sunrise* was a big departure too - I hope every film is. It keeps you curious.

'Before Sunrise' opened on 21 April

High school dreams: Richard Linklater's 'Dazed and Confused', set in 1976

IN THE BUZZ OF

● Geoff Gilmore spent the 70s and 80s as a fairly obscure cinema-studies buff, and then as a programmer for various art theatres in the Bay Area. But in 1986 he became the Chief Programmer of the American Film Festival, a then-regional operation begun by Redford's Sundance Institute.

Under Gilmore's guidance, what is now known as the Sundance Film Festival (or simply Sundance, for short) has become not only the central venue for the increasing importance of American independent cinema, but one of the key festivals of the film world.

His success has him a little perplexed and baffled. Sundance is now routinely vilified by the two extremes in American movie culture. Hollywood is angry that it doesn't provide a new smash hit every year to explode at the box office, as *sex, lies and videotape* did, while supporters of experimental or avant-garde films accuse Gilmore and Sundance of having sold out completely.

I chatted with Gilmore a few days before the festival began. He was living in the buzz of everyone's ego, ambition, hope and fear, the emotions of the film-makers and the demands of their increasingly prestigious audience. He is a shy, delicate, nearly plump man of about 40. In his quieter, calmer moments, he seems younger. When he needs to get official sounding and institutional, he can make himself appear quite a few years older. He has a fairly funny, occasionally pissed-off sense that he can't win for losing. Because he's made the festival a success, he has made himself the possible object of scorn, acrimony and resentment from many different camps.

If this event were of no importance, he would have a quieter life, as no one would care.

But, since careers are now made, and not made, at Sundance, a lot rides on Gilmore's tastes and perceptions. His response, creatively and intellectually, is generosity. He refuses to believe in or champion one kind of cinema at the expense of another. Audiences will be given a wide array of types of films and they will determine what is important. But being neither aesthetic ideologue nor shill for the studios has made him more than his share of enemies.

Gilmore: I was hired in 1990 and I took the festival, I think, another several steps in an evolution, from what had still been (I felt) a fairly low profile to a much higher one. We started to develop the premieres and the special-screening section of the festival, and gave launches or visibility to a number of different films from figures well known in the film industry for being creative, figures who had certainly done a lot of work over the years. John Sayles, Sam Shepard, the kind of work that we could promote by saying, "Here's a film that doesn't belong as a discovery within the independent film world, these aren't neophytes, but they're very much a part of that world." And that formula, which we've pursued over the last five years, seems to have worked very well.

Gross: In 1989, 'sex, lies and videotape' transformed the significance of the festival. In 1991, with 'Reservoir Dogs', Quentin Tarantino was discovered, which was the one other obvious occasion, to my mind, where someone at Sundance was perceived as going to have a huge impact on Hollywood. Were there others besides those? In '90, '92 and '93 there were no big events.

I think that there wasn't quite the same kind of focus from the standpoint of Hollywood. But the interesting thing about the festival in those years and over the last couple of years is that a number of the films that have been in the competition, or been in our festival, have indeed gotten distribution. There were, in any given year, between 13 and 15 or maybe 18 films that actually got out into the marketplace.

Can you honestly say that they really had an impact on the marketplace the way that 'sex, lies and videotape' did? Even 'Reservoir Dogs' performed rather poorly when it actually came to playing in theatres.

That's a whole different discussion. And I certainly wouldn't argue that they have, but that's really not about the festival one way or the other. In fact, someone once pointed out, some *Variety* critic actually, that they felt that this history, of a number of works that had been at the festival then underperforming in the marketplace, was rather interesting. And I said, "Yeah, what it probably confirms is the fact that we, as a festival, do not look to necessarily show very commercial work." In fact, the funny thing is that



Screenwriter Larry Gross talks about independents and Hollywood with Sundance programmer Geoff Gilmore

EVERYONE'S EGO

you would think that the amount of attention that a *Clerks* or a *Hoop Dreams* has gotten, or for that matter Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*, would mean that these films must already have grossed 20 million or 50 million dollars, or else had major impacts on audiences. And in fact, as you are well aware, this couldn't be further from the truth.

So the fact that *Clerks* and *Hoop Dreams* have had terrific openings, and very high profile openings, and critical plaudits and back-stories and so on and so forth, is a result of the interest that I think the critical community pays to the independent world, which is something that has become stronger and stronger in the last five years. And that's not something that has been simply fuelled by their grosses, but by the stories that are involved. I'd say that there are films like *Slacker*, for instance, that have become very much part of the independent film culture, so that people said, OK, Richard Linklater's film is now something that a lot of people use for thinking about certain kinds of fictional structures. I was talking with someone in the multimedia community the other day. We talked about *Slacker* as a model for them in certain ways, to think about the structures of interactive fiction.

So there are certainly film-makers who have come to Sundance who have gone out and made their mark, who have had careers. And there are a number of different people who I think have come out of Sundance in the last couple of years who have actually gone on to make other work which, I would say, says something about what the festival has also become. The reason why so much of the festival right now is overrun by what everyone calls the portable telephone type is that people have realised that this is a world where they're likely to discover real talent, writing talent, acting talent, directing talent, regardless of whether they think the films themselves will actually perform well.

American independent cinema is perceived in some sense healthier than ever, in terms of the interest level, because of the number of films made, yet at the same time, it's performing relatively statically in terms of its overall potential. This is my hypothesis: the reason independent cinema is improving in the consciousness of the culture is that while it has stayed static and produced a certain amount of high quality (though marginal) work, Hollywood has been regressing wildly. So the necessity of interest in independent cinema – for people that have an interest in film, and for people that consume film professionally – becomes more urgent.

I think I very much agree with that assessment. I think that certainly this year, for instance, everyone admitted that it's been a wildly

uneven year, at least, with *Forrest Gump* reaching about 300 millions dollars, and *The Lion King* headed toward that, and seemingly everything else out there performing poorly. Even when you consider not economic performance but critical plaudits, everyone's saying, "What's been good about this?" It doesn't even represent highpoint Hollywood genre work.

I wonder do you think that because the studios have turned their backs so resolutely on personal film-making, there's a sense that film-makers are choosing to bypass the studios more than ever?

I do really believe that's true. A lot of very strange bedfellows have been made in the industry over the past several years, in terms of where film-makers have found funds to work. I think this is because you can't just get a film pushed through the studios that has very strange or unique qualities, or else a kind of magic to it that begs certain kinds of questions. Or if it isn't formulaic, or if it isn't that thing we often see, a deal film more or less put together by agencies who say this is how the film is going to operate, that to have this script you have to take this writer to re-write the script you just did, and so on and so forth.

And working that way is clearly a negative and frustrating experience, for the often enormously talented people in the industry, who when working with the majors don't feel as though they're really getting the chance to develop themselves in the way that they might. And I'm not, by the way, someone who views Hollywood cinema (one) as the enemy, which I don't, or (two) as anathema, which I don't. I'm trained as an archivist and as a film historian, and so I have a huge interest in the classic Hollywood cinema.

And if I've ever been critical of the American independent cinema, it's often because it hasn't taken risks I wish it had taken, that it's not that interesting sometimes. In fact, my argument with and criticism of American independent cinema, at least in the 80s, would have been that it didn't take the risks that it sometimes needed to in order to get the attention that some of this work is now getting.

You issued a statement about the unprecedented number of films submitted to the festival.

One funny thing about the festival over the last couple of years has been the dire predictions that we've had. I remember even a couple of years ago, after the video market for B titles basically died, which had been the economic fuel for a lot of independent work, there were people saying, "Look, production is just going to stop. You're not going to find work. You're going to have 200-plus films submitted to you this year, and you're going to be way down on

that in a couple of years." Well, we've doubled that. People have been willing to work on films in different economic models. They've been willing to take chances, to go out and make films for \$27,000, \$40,000 and \$90,000, which would not have been something people were as willing to do several years ago.

How are you pressured by the industry?

Pressure is the wrong word. I've never named a distributor and I never will, but I remember one, who came to me the very second I took over the film festival and basically said that if I showed these kinds of films at the festival from then on in, distributors wouldn't be coming back, because no one would be interested in the work which I would be showing. And that was in fact the year that *Reservoir Dogs* was at the festival, and that 15 or 17 films that we had in the festival found some level of distribution. When I pointed this out to her, she didn't quite get it. What she basically seemed to be saying was, "Where is the commercial work? What's here that we can pick up?"

The critics and the media come from another point of view, which seems to be, "Here's something that we find particularly interesting as high quality film-making." The industry itself reflects upon talent in a range of different ways, which all say, "OK, where is the new Quentin Tarantino? Where's the film-maker that we're going to discover, the one that really steps out into mainstream independent?" And the independent community then comes back to me and says, "Your festival used to be famous for showing work which is outside of the mainstream, for showcasing black, lesbian, gay, marginal film-makers with marginal stories to tell and bringing attention to them. Or for putting Matty Rich into a position where his stories can reach a lot of different people, or a *Hoop Dreams* or a *Poison*."

And what we then wonder is, "Are we really still showcasing that full spectrum of American independent work? Or are we in some ways starting to respond to that limitation that the Hollywood marketplace mentality wants to put on to us?" Every year that I've done this festival, for the last five years, I've had contradictory comments at the end of it, without exception. Someone has come to me and said that the festival was really selling its soul and was just showing commercial work and not responding any longer to the marginal, independent world. And someone else will say that, commercially, this was a festival that failed, that it just didn't have anything that was really worth picking up, that it wasn't that exciting. It's always that kind of contradictory response. I'm not looking to have a balanced response.

THE WIZARD

Exotic dancers, assassinations and Wagner operas were all caught by Thomas Edison's "phonograph for the eye". What was he like, with his business appetites, his indifference to culture and his lust for invention? By Ian Christie

OF OZ



● If there is any common image of Thomas Alva Edison today in Europe, it's probably as the grumpy old man who organised a group of fellow American film pioneers into 'The Trust' – a turn-of-the-century cartel aimed at monopolising the motion picture business. There is a photograph of The Trust, taken at the 1908 meeting where agreement was hammered out between those who had until recently been bitter rivals. Everyone wears bowler hats except Edison the Great Inventor, already a legend in his own lifetime, who wears a German-style cap which clearly sets him apart from these businessmen gathered at his West Orange base to claim this young industry as their own.

For most of the previous eight years Edison had harried these same men, claiming that almost everything they did infringed at least one of his 1,093 patents. Now he had suddenly decided to make them an offer they couldn't afford to refuse. Taking the same route as other great American robber barons – Carnegie, Rockefeller, Frick – he proposed a trust which would 'protect' its founder members, and fight off newcomers. But this final role, as Godfather to the American movie industry, was also Edison's most improbable and mysterious.

Invention, for Edison, was a religion. In the terms of his Scottish-American Protestantism, it was a spiritual quest to discover the 'divine plan' and to apply it more efficiently to human needs. And as the Frontier gave way to America's new dynamic capitalism, it also became a kind of patriotism: making American destiny manifest through profit and monopoly. Finally, it became his identity, his being: *I invent therefore I am*. And the number of his patents bears witness to a terrifying rapacity in claiming for himself what his assistants had played an increasingly major part in creating.

His early inventions had sprung from first-hand experience. He had started his working life as a railway telegraph operator, where he saw the potential of automating parts of the sending process, and had set up his first laboratory in a railway goods wagon – so that he could continue working round the clock, or so the legend claims. Edison's involvement with electric light – he invented the modern bulb, as well as batteries and large-scale distribution systems – had both a commercial and a symbolic significance, lighting the darkness of the late 19th century's "cities of dreadful night". His work on sound, which led to the carbon microphone used by Bell for the telephone in 1876 and the phonograph in 1877, may have had a more personal motive as he started to become deaf. Certainly Bell and the French moving picture pioneer Demeny had both started work on sound reproduction as an off-shoot of their interest in improving methods of teaching the deaf to speak: an initial interest in making good impaired human faculties became for them, in Marshall McLuhan's classic definition of modern media, a dream of extending them.

By the late 1870s Edison had become a world-wide celebrity and a new kind of prophet. Having established himself as the master inventor, he increasingly used his predictions to set the agenda for what would come next – which he then magically *made* happen. In 1878, long

BRITISH POSTERS AND DESIGNS

before he had started to work on reproducing images, *Punch* had foretold for the following year, "Edison's Telephonoscope (transmits light as well as sound)": the cartoon shows an English couple talking to their distant children in Ceylon "every evening" by means of "an electric camera-obscura over their bedroom mantel-piece" (see over). Today we can only see this as an astonishingly confident anticipation of the wall-sized flat screen videophone, only two years after the invention of the telephone and a year after the phonograph.

Edison had perfectly good reason to believe his own publicity. It seemed that whatever he predicted *could* somehow be made to happen. Meeting the English photographer Eadweard Muybridge in 1888 inspired him to announce the idea of a "phonograph for the eye". It would take four further years of work (mostly by assistants) to realise it; but the key idea, of recording images *like sound*, brings us right to the heart of Edison's genius as an inventor. It was both a straightforward extension of something that already worked and a leap into the dark, literally. Moving pictures would take Edison far from the drawing room and the factory floor, into another important Victorian space, the shadowy world of eroticism and commercialised pornography.

At the very moment that Edison was reaching the end of his work on the "phonograph for the eye", he had also become a character in someone else's erotic fantasy. The French Symbolist writer Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's drama *Axel* had defined the languorous, archaic, 'decadent' sensibility of the 1890s. Villiers was no enthusiast for progress, but in his fantasy *L'Eve future* – about an artificial 'ideal' woman created to satisfy a man's desires, the *fin-de-siècle* counterpart to Mary Shelley's high Romantic *Frankenstein* – he made Edison the woman's creator.

In Villiers' writing, Edison is an out-and-out alchemist, with all the picturesque trappings. We first meet him at sunset, wrapped in a magician's cloak, tobacco smoke wreathing his head like incense. The decor is pure hokum, but the essence of Villiers' Edison is strangely plausible – indeed it helps us see what was in contemporary eyes truly magical about the Wizard of Menlo Park. This fictional Edison is ready to create an android to satisfy the desires of a love-sick friend – one of those perverse English aristocrats cherished by French writers. This android is a fantastic extrapolation from the phonograph and an anticipation of the fantasy that millions would soon experience before the cinema screen. Its memory bank of speech, culled from the best of world literature, ensures that Lord Ewald never has to endure 'normal' female banality when 'conversing' with his robot. And Villiers wasn't alone in his fantasy. Even Jules Verne, normally more robust about matters of the heart, included in *The Castle in the Carpathians* a dead diva recreated by one of her lovers via recorded sound and moving image. Already Edison and his inventions were linked, in fiction writers' minds, with do-it-yourself gratification – and even with the final blasphemy, that of creating the illusion of life.

As it happened, the official debut of the Kinetoscope couldn't have been further removed

FORM 319

THE ACME OF REALISM.

THE EDISON PHONOGRAPH

LOOKING FOR THE BAND

The STANDARD \$20

NONE GENUINE WITHOUT THIS TRADE MARK

Thomas A Edison

NATIONAL PHONOGRAPH COMPANY
ORANGE, N. J., U.S.A.; N. Y. OFFICE, 15 CHURCH STREET; CHICAGO OFFICE, 144 WELLS AVENUE.

Business is business:
Thomas Edison, the
American-Scottish
Protestant, left;

two of Edison's
advertisements for the
phonograph, one of his many
inventions, above and below

THE EDISON PHONOGRAPH

HAVE YOU HEARD IT?

TRADE MARK

from such hints of licentious 'entertainment'. It formed the climax to a reception for the National Federation of Women's Clubs, given by Mrs Edison on 20 May 1891. After lunch at their mansion, Glenmont – which remains today a perfectly preserved monument to Mrs Edison's Victorian tastes – the visitors were taken to the nearby laboratory. There, according to one newspaper report, "Edison chuckled," as he demonstrated "the picture of a man which bowed, smiled, and took off its hat with the most perfect naturalness."

The well-mannered image was almost certainly of his assistant William Kennedy Laurie Dickson (who had actually done most of the work in Room Five at West Orange). However, only Edison featured in the carefully-orchestrated press coverage of the next few weeks. All the examples he gave to the press of the Kinetoscope's potential were of subjects that would certainly not have offended the clubwomen: a senator introducing the explorer Stanley at the Metropolitan Opera House, as well as recordings of plays and operas. The setting Edison envisaged was clearly domestic ("you can sit in your parlour and look at a big screen") ▶

◀ although he had only a peep-show with a few seconds of action to demonstrate it. Even in his practised super-salesman mode, Edison was still speculating like a Sunday School superintendent about bigger and better forms of "improvement". Could he have known that in the place of such pieties he was about to unleash the first 'virtual reality' machine, a means of transporting audiences into a collective dream where intense visual stimulation would overwhelm their normal inhibitions and create a new sphere of imaginary immorality beyond even Villiers' or Verne's powers of imagination?

Perhaps he had some inkling. The subjects chosen for the first Kinetoscope loops included exotic dancers – at least one of whom, Annabelle Moore, was soon linked with a stag-party nude dancing scandal – as well as musclemen, magicians and such ambiguous icons of Americana as the Wild West sharpshooter Annie Oakley. Did Edison personally choose which performers were to be invited to West Orange and filmed in the tar-paper structure that served as a studio, soon nicknamed the "Black Maria"? Did he have – as many of his contemporaries did – a 'secret life' frequenting New York music halls, and other place of ill repute far from Glenmont? If he did either, there is no evidence of it. But he certainly knew what was being sold in his name, succeeding like many of his position and generation in retaining a high-minded image while allowing his business follow its own seamier logic.

Edison had been forced into the public arena by dramatic developments in Europe. He had failed to patent the Kinetoscope abroad, considering the move an unnecessary extravagance. This was a fateful decision, because it allowed Robert Paul in London and the Lumières in France to benefit from studying Edison's machine without worrying that they might be infringing his patent. And it was as a direct result of these successful European experiments that the 'social' practice of projecting on a screen – rather than privatised coin-in-the-slot solo viewing – became the preferred mode of movie consumption. Characteristically Edison bought up a projector patent already held by Thomas Armat, along with the right to call it the "Edison Vitascope". On 23 April 1896, he relaunched his moving picture business two years after the Kinetoscope had started it, with a much-heralded show at Koster and Bial's Broadway music hall. By an irony, though the programme consisted mainly of recycled Kinetoscope loops, the biggest hit was Paul's film *Rough Sea* – praised as "the closest work of nature that any work of man has yet achieved" – which would never have existed had not Edison's original invention drawn Paul into this novel business.

What happened or failed to happen next is puzzling, and perhaps a sign of Edison's deep ambivalence about the Pygmalion he had created. For while others jumped enthusiastically into the new medium, he held back, starving his production company of resources or encouragement. His energies went instead into an endlessly tangled legal battle, ultimately futile, to claim nothing less than a patent on all moving pictures in America. The courts were reluctant

PUNCH'S ALMANACK FOR 1879.

(December 6, 1878.)



EDISON'S TELEPHONOSCOPE (TRANSMITS LIGHT AS WELL AS SOUND).
(Every evening, before going to bed, Father and Motherfamilias sit up an electric camera-obscura, and gladden their eyes with the sight of their Children at the
Andropods, and converse gaily with them through the work.)
Fatherfamilias (in White Flannel). "DEARIE, COME FLOWER, I WANT TO WEATHER." Mother (from Ceylon). "YES, PAPA DEAR."
Fatherfamilias. "WHO IS THAT SHAMING YOUNG LADY PLAYING ON CHARLIE'S SIDE?" Mother. "SHE'S JUST SOME OTHER FROM HOLLAND, PAPA. I'LL INTRODUCE YOU TO HER AS SOON AS THE GARDEN'S OVER!"

to concede his claims, especially when it became clear that assistants like Dickson had been forced by the terms of their employment to give false credit to Edison for aspects of the invention. As the suits continued into 1900, Edison contemplated selling all his moving picture interests to his arch-rival, American Mutoscope and Biograph (for whom Dickson now worked). The deal was ready to sign when, in a Kane-like act of defiance, he drew back at the last moment and returned to the patent war which would continue until 1908.

But even during this period, when little about moving pictures except litigation seems to have interested him, there were two projects that show Edison still trying to assert 'Protestant' seriousness against a rising tide of mere entertainment. The first was the remarkable series of films which began at the Buffalo Exposition in 1901. The previous year, the Paris Exposition Universelle had yielded a popular series of subjects, and Edison had an exclusive contract to film at the Buffalo Expo, which President McKinley was due to visit on 5-6 September. Edison's crew had already taken some 20 views of various pavilions, when their coverage became suddenly and horribly newsworthy. An anarchist shot and fatally wounded the President in the 'Temple of Music' pavilion – Edison's cameraman happened to be filming the crowd waiting outside as word spread among them. This record of a dramatic non-event was starkly named *Mob Outside the Temple of Music*, and the camera crew was instructed to follow subsequent events, filming McKinley's coffin leaving Buffalo, his funeral procession in Washington and his burial at Canton, Ohio.

It was not the first film coverage of a state occasion: a Lumière operator had recorded the celebration of the coronation of Tsar Nikolai II of Russia in 1896, and Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee had been filmed in the following year. But the Buffalo-McKinley series created a sequence of events from discrete items which looks forward, beyond the selectivity of newsreels, to modern extended coverage of events in

the cinema and especially on television.

Did Edison play any part in deciding to follow the McKinley story? Evidence of his direct involvement in the Kinetograph Department of the Edison Manufacturing Company is elusive. But we can speculate that he had some personal involvement in the second of his projects against the grain – the filming in 1904 of scenes from Wagner's *Parsifal* – since the idea of combining motion pictures with sound recording to preserve an opera had turned up more than once in his promotion of the Kinetoscope. In the May 1891 newspaper interviews, he had spoken expansively of recording an opera in complete 30-minute acts. "I can put a roll of gelatine strip a mile long into it if I like," said the inventor yesterday. (The *New York Sun* reporter was apparently sceptical: "Taking 46 photographs per second in half an hour there would be 82,800 photographs on the gelatine strip. If the photographs were half an inch square and half an inch apart, the strip of film used in taking a 30-minute act of an opera would be 6,900 feet long and Mr Edison would need something more than his 'mile of gelatine'.")

And again, in a book written to order by Dickson, *The History of the Kinetograph*, Edison had returned to the idea of recording performances by stars of the Metropolitan Opera, and storing them long after their deaths. This appeal to opera as potential 'quality' entertainment might have been no more than a reflex attempt to talk the Kinetoscope up-market, of course: but the filming of *Parsifal* in 1904 suggests otherwise.

Wagner had intended his last 'sacred' music drama for performance at Bayreuth only, and so his widow tried, unsuccessfully, to ban the Met from mounting its production in late 1903. The resulting controversy and respectful coverage led to a dramatic (i.e. spoken) version being launched, which Edison contracted to film. The total length of the eight scenes is about 30 minutes – there were apparently plans for an elaborate musical presentation using lantern slides to fill out the narrative. (This presentation has

recently been recreated by the Library of Congress's film music expert, Gillian Anderson.)

This unlikely project needs to be understood in the context of a turn-of-the-century culture which had a somewhat less reverential attitude (though no less star-struck) to opera, and which naturally wanted to link the new marvel of moving pictures with its favourite dramatic medium. Opera singers were already becoming the first recording stars thanks to the phonograph, and both Gaumont in France and Messter in Germany would soon have catalogues boasting many hundreds of popular and operatic synchronised sound films. In 1915 Cecil B. DeMille would make the Met diva Geraldine Farrar one of Hollywood's first stars in a series of opera-related films.

But in 1904, Edison was too far ahead of his time – even in the year that followed the success of *The Great Train Robbery* very few prints of the highly-priced *Parsifal* were sold. Edwin Porter, who directed both, managed to keep Edison's output competitive until around 1907. But there was clearly little encouragement from above for the film department. Starved of investment, it was still being run more like a service necessary to sell equipment than a fully-fledged production company. And despite Edison's harassment, other American producers were belatedly starting to forge ahead and challenge the European companies who had a major share of the American market. Biograph, which Dickson had helped found, was encouraging a talented young actor turned producer named D. W. Griffith. And Vitagraph had decided to beat the Europeans at their own game by making its own classics, with a string of Shakespeare and Dante adaptations for 1908.

Edison was increasingly out of step with an industry he still aimed to control. The solution, recognising the fact that he alone could not satisfy the market that "his" invention had created, lay in forming a cartel. And so on 18 December 1908, after a year of tough negotiations, the founder members of the Motion Picture Patent Company (MPPC) gathered at West Orange. The next seven years saw American production develop rapidly. These were the glory years of Griffith at Biograph, which also saw the start of the great American genres, the western and the gangster film, and of comedy, with Mack Sennett providing a school for all future slapstick. European imports began to lose ground, at least until the appearance of the Italian epics – *The Fall of Troy*, *Quo Vadis*, *Cabiria* – set a new benchmark in the teens.

But none of these developments interested Edison. Even while longer films were sweeping the board, he insisted that the public in fact wanted short subjects and insisted on persevering with these, possibly as a way of avoiding the investment that major production would require. The truth was that he had never been interested in fiction, regarding it as at best a necessary extravagance to maintain equipment sales, and he was certainly not about to compete with the new breed of producer – many of them with immigrant backgrounds – in this speculative and perhaps for him immoral trade. However, even this rearguard action against new trends sometimes bore fruit. A 1912 exper-

iment linking a series of short films, *What Happened to Jane*, with a parallel series of short stories in the *Ladies' World* magazine suggests the influence of Mrs Edison. But it also anticipates the whole growth of serials and print tie-ins which would revolutionise film-going habits over the next two decades (which Edison played no subsequent part in).

Ever the prophet of multimedia, Edison remained obstinately true to his original interests in later years, still trying to perfect synchronised sound and image, and trying to return his "phonograph for the eye" to a domestic setting. The Kinetophone sound-film system was leased to theatres with a regular supply of vaudeville acts and extracts from plays. And in 1911 Edison launched the "Home PK" (PK: projecting kinetoscope). Neither of these was exactly successful, but as with so many of Edison's 'inventions' the aim was true. His friend in later life, George Eastman, would in the end accomplish with the Cine-Kodak 16mm system and Kodacolor what Edison only dreamed of: home-movies in full colour.

Meanwhile, government anti-trust proceedings against the MPPC started in 1912, and succeeded in dissolving it in 1915. In 1918, Edison sold his Bronx studio and ended his formal connection with an industry to which he had never really belonged. Eastman had long urged him against trying to control an invention as far-reaching as moving pictures, but Edison had been unable to shake off the domineering, acquisitive habits of a lifetime, until he was effectively forced to concede defeat. Nonetheless, he remained a visionary to the end, and in the late 20s was claiming (in the sweeping terms the media had loved for over 50 years) that films would soon replace books.

Looking back from the start of the CD-ROM era, we can see he was basically right. The potential for encoding large amounts of information on mass-produced, machine-readable supports had been born with the phonograph, the true forerunner of all modern mass media. He grasped this intuitively, putting it across in what must have been wonderfully seductive interviews, and cumulatively awakening the nineteenth century to what lay ahead.

Edison was a both a driven and a divided man. The incentive he admitted to the outside world was industrial success – power, wealth,

monopoly. He harnessed science to industry with electricity generating stations, iron-ore milling machinery and cement manufacture. But his bravado hid the insecurity of a self-educated man, who regularly advised parents not to send their sons to college.

This same insecurity played into Edison's popular persona as "the Wizard". It was perhaps a strange role for a Protestant taskmaster to accept, but it may have been the only way he could deal with the god-like power that invention brought. Edison was already established in the popular mind as "the Wizard" long before L. Frank Baum wrote *The Wizard of Oz*, but it's tempting to recast him in the same mould as Oz, the medicine-show fake who hides behind the mystique he's created. When x-rays became a popular craze in 1896, Edison climbed aboard the bandwagon. Having announced "improvements" to Roentgen's apparatus, he opened a fairground x-ray show in New York, decked out in spooky mock-Egyptian decor. And, rather as Disney used to visit Disneyland incognito, Edison apparently went to watch the punters. We can imagine him, Oz-like, hiding behind the curtain and spying on the customers, watching them pay for a glimpse of their own mortality.

For decades, in the labs and workshops of Menlo Park and West Orange, he wrestled furiously with the many stubborn mechanical problems that barred the way to an automated utopia. Today, a poignant corner of the lab still houses a bizarre collection of animal horns and hooves, which were collected during his search for recording materials in the pre-plastic era. For a moment we're back in the world of the medieval alchemist.

So long as invention played its part in the business-like American scheme of things, Edison could reconcile the contradictions of his position. But once the alchemy of moving pictures had started, he could no longer control a monster that threatened the sanctity of the traditional hearth. And so all his positive energies were directed towards putting the genie back in the bottle: redomesticating the movies.

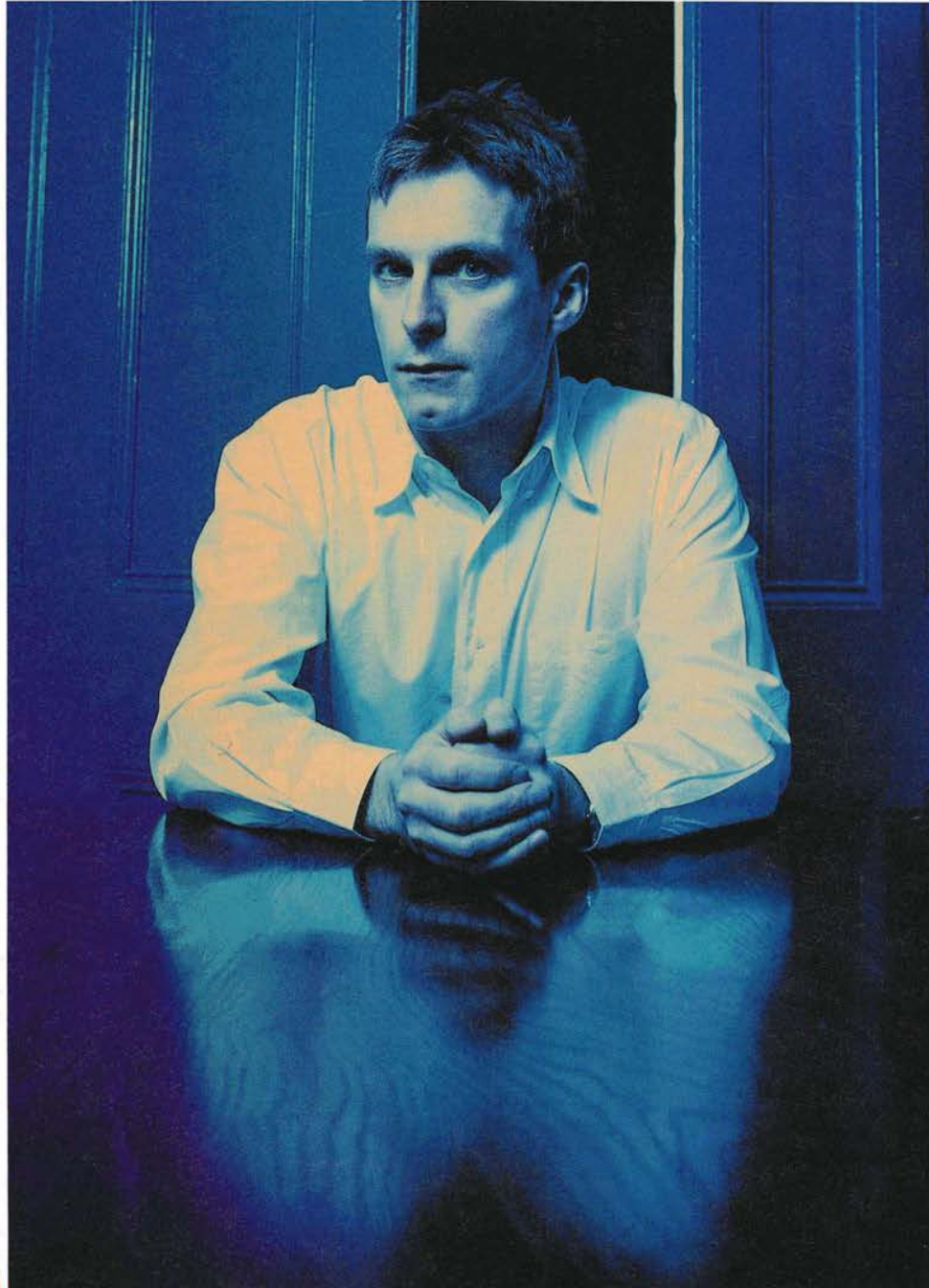
Why did he so want to control something he seems always to have despised? What had drawn him into a mode of trickery that went against the deepest beliefs of his Protestant culture? Was it this realisation that led him to allow it to die through neglect? The answers to these questions take on a new significance when we compare the 1890s with the 1990s. For what makes the 'centenary of cinema' more than an excuse for showbiz nostalgia is the disturbing realisation that *history is repeating itself*. The media explosion we're living through parallels almost exactly the first communications revolution that Edison started in the 1880s. And just as such media pioneers misunderstood what they had started, so we too may be misreading what is happening around us. Above all – and this is the truly eerie part – the revolution that Edison originally imagined but didn't live to see, is what's happening to us today.

This article owes much to Gordon Hendricks' pioneering 'The Edison Motion Picture Myth', Charles Musser's indispensable 'Before the Nickelodeon' and Annette Michelson's article 'On the Eve of the Future' in 'October' No. 29, 1984.



Never at rest: Thomas Edison

Stephen Rea as an escaped political prisoner flees Ireland for New York. This is the opening of Ronan Bennett's screenplay. He searches for a director in the year of the IRA ceasefire.



A

SCREENWRITER'S DIARY

Thursday 28 July 1994

The script is already overdue by several months. The three of us – Stephen Rea, Chris Curling of CSL Films, and myself – had first met in New York in March 1993 to discuss it. I'd had an idea for a television film and had suggested Stephen to Chris; Chris had talked to Stephen, who had an idea for a feature film. We discussed the two ideas and I came up with a third. My existing commitments ruled out starting work on it until the end of that year. That was all right: Stephen also had commitments. Then I said April, then June. Now it was Monday 1 August.

I look at the title page on the screen: *A Further Gesture*. It's only a working title, but it's not good. I read what I've written – some 60 pages. Stephen's character, Dowd, escapes from prison in Ireland and makes his way to New York, where he strives to find a new life by cutting himself off from the associations and commitments of his past. Isolated and without any-

thing or anyone to fall back on, he fails. His life goes downhill. He is 'rescued' by a couple of Hispanic workers, and forms a relationship with one of them, Monica, a woman who still 'believes'. He is jaded, sceptical, alienated; she is not. He is isolated, she belongs. I like the first 30 pages or so, which is an extended escape sequence, but the rest isn't working. I try tinkering with it. It's not coming. I feel demoralised and stop work before I really even start. I ring Chris to tell him it's coming along fine. I'll deliver on Monday morning as promised. "I'll tell Stephen," Chris says. A little while later he rings back. "Stephen says he can't wait."

Friday 29 July

No work. Go to dinner at a friend's. Harriet Walter there. We talk a little about *A Man You Don't Meet Every Day*, a drama I wrote for Channel 4, directed by Angela Pope. It was filmed in the early summer and

Harriet was in it opposite Richard Hawley. She asks if I'm involved much in the editing. I'm not. If you don't trust the director and editor why are you working with them? Driving home, I think: tomorrow I've got to start.

Saturday 30 July

I get up early, ignore the newspapers and go straight to the desk. I open the file and read again from the beginning. The escape sequence is fine. I take out some scenes, rearrange others and give Stephen's character, who seems a little passive at the moment, more lines, but otherwise cut. Then I get to post-escape. Should I stick with what I have or start again from scratch? I press the delete button. I try an alternative idea. After a few pages, it starts to come alive. More ideas come, more characters. It's all working and I know I have it. I continue until evening, past my normal working hours. I like to start and finish early.

Sunday 31 July

Type in *The End* around 11pm.

Monday 1 August

Call Phil at CSL Films to send a bike. Copies to Chris and script editor Roxy Spencer. She and I have worked well together on earlier projects. Now begins the worst period, waiting for the reaction. After thinking the script seemed OK, I am now not so sure.

Thursday 4 August

Roxy calls. She likes the script. There is such excitement in her voice that I know at once she means it. Relief. Chris calls. He likes it.

Monday 8 August

Belfast. To the Whiterock Centre to see a play – Pam Brighton's production of *A Night in November*, as part of the West Belfast Community Festival. I talk to Stephen Rea, who's in the audience. He hasn't had the script yet.

Tuesday 9 August

Meet Robert Cooper at Broadcasting House in Ormeau Avenue, then off to his flat to talk about the second draft of the feature film script he and Barnaby Spurrer of Redwing are developing. I'm happier about the title of this one – *A Lake of Ashes* – but there have been problems in the earlier draft and revisions, and we now have to unpick the whole thing if we're to make anything of it. The story is set partly in San Francisco and partly in Paraguay, and concerns the efforts of a son to find and talk to his father about a heinous act his father committed many years ago. The question the film asks, I suppose, is, "Can there be forgiveness?" And if someone repents, is it right to withhold forgiveness? What is the action of the just man when confronted by someone who has committed a barbarous act? What if that someone is your father? What if he seems not brutal but actually rather sad and pathetic?

I have been dreading this meeting, thinking it was going to be a long, hard slog. But in fact, once we start on it, the ideas come tumbling out fast, and they seem – theoretically at least – to work. We realise the narrative is too crowded. It's a question of cutting, refining, focusing. After two or three hours, we have something worked out. I will write up two or three pages on how the story now goes and get them to Robert and Barnaby by the end of the month. Then, if everyone's agreed, I'll start on the second draft.

Sunday 14 August

Stephen rings me at my mother's in Belfast. He has some points to make but he likes the script. This is good. "Chris can now go off and raise the money," he says. Can he?

Thursday 18 August

I do a little work on *The Crimes of Harry d'Souza*, commissioned by David Thompson at the BBC. David and his script editor Elinor Day had asked if I could come up with a pilot for a possible series with a detective as a hero. I'd said no. "An undercover cop?" No, I don't do that. However, I said I could give them a criminal as hero and detective. I think of films like *Get Carter* and *Straight Time*, and of television plays like *Law and Order*. What made those pieces fascinating to me was the way in which the thief, the criminal, was presented without moral judgment. We the audience were simply invited to look at what they were doing

and go through with them the choices they made. In my own work I've always opted for the criminal/terrorist/outsider's perspective. A whole series in this vein appeals to me. I write about 30 pages.

Friday 26 August

Send Robert and Barnaby the outline for the second draft of *A Lake of Ashes*.

Thursday 1 September

First day of the IRA ceasefire. A call from Margaret Loke from the *New York Times Magazine* to ask if I'll do a piece. First, however, she asks, "Are you a member of the IRA?" (the initials did not sound too familiar to her). I think about telling her there is a 14-year prison sentence for membership, but I merely say no. I say I'll think about it and call her back.

Sunday 4 September

Robert Cooper calls and says he has read the outline and we should go ahead with the second draft of *A Lake of Ashes*. Write a piece for the German newspaper *Die Woche* on Gerry Adams. Spend the evening reading the coverage of the ceasefire. Much of it is sour (Republicans have done what newspapers said they could never do); some of it is hysterical. Conor Cruise O'Brien, that old reactionary, says "peace means war".

Monday 5 September

Roy Greenslade, writing in *The Guardian* about the "grudging coverage" puts it well: "the speed of change which occurs when armed conflict ends... often leaves the media exposed as ideologically backward." I ring Mary-Kay Wilmers at the *London Review of Books* and ask to do a diary on the ceasefire and the media response.

Tuesday 6 September

Meet Peter Kosminsky for lunch. Earlier in the year John Willis at Channel 4 had asked us to develop a script for a drama documentary with the premise: Britain pulls out of Ireland, what happens? At the time, it seemed to me the best idea that anyone has come up with for a drama about the conflict. The trouble is that, since the ceasefire, events have overtaken us. Peter and I review the situation and are forced to conclude that it would be impossible to come up with a convincing narrative: the film would go out in a year's time at the earliest. Who knows how things will stand then? The situation is just too fluid and unpredictable. I have to laugh: film-makers have had a quarter of a century, and now we've missed this very generous deadline. Too bad.

Wednesday 7 September

Several calls from Margaret Loke from the *New York Times Magazine*. She had talked to her editor and they have decided how they want me to write the piece. Is the ceasefire a cunning plot by the IRA and the British government to isolate the Loyalists, turn on them together and force the Protestants into a united Ireland? I suggest another approach. She asks for a "memo". I take a deep breath and agree. I'll fax it tomorrow.

Saturday 10 September

Chris is talking about showing *A Further Gesture* to Tim Bevan at Working Title. Stephen wants us to talk to Stephen Frears about directing it. I know that's going to be a very long shot.

Wednesday 14 September

Meeting at Channel 4 with Belinda Allen, Waldemar Januszczak and Barrie Hall to discuss scheduling and publicity for *A Man You Don't Meet Every Day*. The London Film Festival definitely want to show the film. If it goes into the LFF it won't be shown on Channel 4 until the new year. I'm not so pleased about that, but I like the idea of it in the festival.

Tuesday 20 September

Discussions with Angela about scheduling *A Man You Don't Meet Every Day*. She thinks it's best to drop the London Film Festival and have the film shown on television as soon as possible. I think we should try to keep it in the festival and wait to see if Waldemar can find an earlier slot. Ceri tells me the LFF have scheduled it for NFT 1 on 13 November at 11am.

Call from David Thompson with a casual inquiry about *The Crimes of Harry d'Souza*. I say it's coming along fine. He says no rush, we can't make it until next year anyway. Mentally, I shuffle *Harry* further down the agenda.

Friday 23 September

Angela rings to say she really is unhappy with the scheduling of the film in the LFF and the plans for transmission. She persuades me. I fax Waldemar, arguing for as early a transmission date as possible, never mind the festival.

Monday 26 September

Start work on a revision of *A Further Gesture* to take into account the notes of Stephen, Chris and Roxy. I am worried about the ending, which, almost on a whim, I decide to change radically. A call from Barrie Hall at Channel 4 to say we now have a date for *A Man You Don't Meet*: Wednesday 2 November at 10pm. This means taking it out of the LFF.

Thursday 6 October

Call from Antonia Bird, who's in Los Angeles editing her new film. Antonia and I first met when Robert Cooper approached her to direct my first film for television, *Love Lies Bleeding*. Her dates and ours didn't work out, so she pulled out and we eventually found Michael Winterbottom. For a couple of years, Antonia and I have been trying to find a project to work together on. She takes a very realistic view of the business: *Priest* was a hit at Toronto and since then the studios have been after her. She intends to use the period in which she is in favour to make the films she wants to make – politically challenging and provocative – the kind that later they might not let her make. Earlier in the year we had discussed one or two possible ideas. Had I done anything with them? I tell her about *A Further Gesture*. Ring Chris to tell him. He'll send her the script. He wonders whether Stephen has seen any of Antonia's work.

Friday 7 October

Mary-Kay faxes me letters the *London Review of Books* has received in response to my piece. One begins: "Ronan Bennett's *Ceasefire Diary* is a good example of the way left-wing papers give space to the voice of terrorism." Another correspondent describes the piece as "contemptible".

Monday 10 October

I finish the revised first draft of *A Further Gesture*, and send a copy to Chris and a copy to my agent, Jenne Casarotto.

Tuesday 11 October

Off to Broadcasting House to record *Fire and Rain*, a memoir I have written about my time in Long Kesh in the early 1970s, and particularly about the destruction of the camp when it was burned down in a riot in October 1974.

Wednesday 12 October

Letter from Terry, a friend who's serving a long sentence for armed robbery, with some vivid descriptions of violence in prison – stabbings and “boilings”. “Boilings”, pouring oil or water over an enemy when they least expect it – usually in the toilets or showers – are very popular now. I remember another friend, John, telling me how prison had changed from the 70s, when he first went in. Then there had been some sense of collective spirit, some solidarity between cons. Now it is every man for himself, a much more violent and dangerous place – a young man's place, John says, and lots of drugs. Terry says he's got himself into a new rehabilitation unit in the Scrubs in an effort to get off heroin. A very powerful and emotional letter. I've used a lot of what John and Terry have said before about prison in a play I wrote earlier in the year for BBC radio, *Marked for Place*, which is to be broadcast next month.

Chris rings to say that David Aukin from Channel 4 had tried to call him about *A Further Gesture*. Chris'll call back tomorrow.

Monday 7 November

Meet Chris just after mid-day and we have a brief chat before meeting David Aukin and Allon Reich, David's assistant. David, it turns out, is keen on the script. “Let's make it,” he says. We discuss elements of the script that need work – everyone on the same wavelength as far as this is concerned. David says Channel 4 would want to be the majority investor and then we fall to discussing possible directors. Various suggestions made: Danny Boyle, Antonia, Bertrand Tavernier, Michael Winterbottom, Mike Figgis, Stephen Frears, some obviously more realistic hopes than others. Chris comes out of the meeting pleased. He hasn't formally agreed to anything because he wants to talk to Stephen Rea. But this is a good start. He's happy. Me too. I wish it were always this easy.

Wednesday 9 November

Watch *A Man You Don't Meet Every Day*. A year's work passes by in 70 minutes.

Wednesday 16 November

Call from Gerry Adams' publisher asking me to do an “in conversation” with Gerry at Waterstone's on Friday, to mark publication of his *Selected Writings*.

Friday 18 November

Just before 1pm get to Waterstone's. Huge crowd, scores of photographers, TV cameras. Squeezed in. Downstairs for a bit of peace and quiet with the staff and with Gerry and his security people. The Waterstone's staff lead us to a small office. The security people are anxious about whether it has been checked. “What's that parcel?” one of them says. He ushers Gerry and the rest of us out while he investigates the package. “Francie,” Gerry says, holding out his hand for a last shake, “if anything goes wrong...” At the event itself, the Waterstone's manager welcomes Gerry, makes a short speech about how important it is that controversial people are heard, bracketing Gerry rather improbably with Helena Kennedy and

Salman Rushdie. Then Steve, Gerry's publisher, introduces Gerry and me. We talk for about half an hour, then questions from the audience. All friendly, except for the first contributor, who turns out to be an enraged man from the Libertarian Alliance.

Tuesday 13 December

Off to Chris Curling's office in Notting Hill for 11.15am, then around the corner to Stephen Frears' house. Stephen likes the script – particularly the first 50 pages. But he doesn't like the change of tone in New York – the beginning is monumental, the second part domestic, he says. He makes interesting points, but what he is really saying is that he would have liked a different film. It's academic, though, because he is unavailable for most of '95 even if he wanted to do it. For Chris and me it is back to square one, looking for a director.

Wednesday 14 December

Ring Stephen Rea, who is filming in Hong Kong and not having a great time by the sounds of it. “I am now clinically insane,” he says. We broach the issue of directors. Basically, Stephen wants Stephen Frears. I says this isn't possible. Anyone else? No suggestions.

Monday 16 January 1995

I finish the second draft of *A Lake of Ashes* today. It's a complete reworking of the script. Barely a line remains the same, although the narrative's original trajectory and the dilemmas are unaltered. I feel happy with this piece of work. Chris rings to say that he and David have been talking to Tom Rothman and Claudia Lewis of Fox-Searchlight, a recently established arm of Fox set up specifically to do smaller budget, independent films with newer directors. They are both interested in *A Further Gesture* and have indicated that, with the right director, they are prepared to fund it, alone, or with Channel 4. Their first choice is Antonia Bird.

Wednesday 18 January

Evening meet Stephen Rea and Chris at Daphne's in Camden. Stephen is uncertain about Channel 4 being the main investor: this immediately involves budgetary limits. Chris and I point out the advantages of Channel 4 and Fox-Searchlight: editorial independence, support, as free a hand as you're likely to get, people who share your vision of what the film should be. But Stephen isn't interested in doing the film with Antonia Bird. No way. He is unmoveable. Michael Winterbottom? Against, though not as vociferously. Stephen stresses the need for a director with “cinematic vision”. Chris and I say that we need to agree on one soon, if the film is to be made in the summer. Stephen suggests Chris Gerolmo, a young director with whom he has made a film for HBO, *Citizen X*. Gerolmo is a writer of some repute (*Mississippi Burning*), but is this the man of “cinematic vision”? But more worrying from my point of view is the fact that any writer-director worth his salt is going to want to change the material. No further forward by the end of the evening.

Robert Cooper rings. He's very happy with the second draft of *Ashes*, but is concerned that the last third is a little underdeveloped. More dialogue is needed between the father and son. I'm happy to do this, since in fact I had cut material because I thought the last scenes were too wordy. But everyone – Barnaby, Robert and Roxy – seems to think it is too emotionally thin.

Monday 23 January

To the Groucho, that dreadful place. Chris Gerolmo is already there, with a copy of the revised first draft of *A Further Gesture*. The one thing that makes him “uncomfortable”, he says, is “the morality, the idea behind the film”. Dowd is a “fuck-up, a failure” when he's not involved in “these violent groups killing people”. I correct him – he's a failure when he's not involved politically, when he has lost contact with the commitments that defined his early life. “If I were involved in the film,” he says, “I would want him to be involved with another kind of community.” It is not an easy meeting. Chris G and I know, without having to say anything, that we cannot collaborate on this.

Tuesday 24 January

David rings to talk about our meeting last night with Stephen. I cannot say it was successful. David is keen to find a way to move things forward. Chris Curling and David have now agreed that the film will be through Channel 4. It is not clear whether Fox-Searchlight will be the other partner. It depends on who we get as director.

Thursday 26 January

David rings at 9am. He had talked to Stephen on the phone and said what Stephen seems to want is an experienced director (Chris Gerolmo notwithstanding). So David thinks it is worth spending a little more time trying to find one. We go through the names: Peter Yates, Paul Schrader, Arthur Penn, Peter Weir. Will any of these be available? Will any of these big names be prepared to consider a small, independent movie? Arthur Penn is not a young man, but he has made great films: *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Little Big Man*, *Night Moves*. David makes him sound interesting: from the independent sector, runs the Actor's Studio in New York. Chris doing availability checks.

Up to Highbury Place with Chris to meet David Kavanagh and Christian Routh at the European Script Fund office. Some discussion of the script. Both David and Christian echoing criticisms others have made: the middle sequence weak, Dowd too passive, his motives for getting involved with the Latinos unclear. But they seem to like the project and indicate they will back it. Chris drops me home, then rings at 7pm to say they had found that Peter Yates, Paul Schrader and Arthur Penn are all available. Scripts to be sent. Chris, however, favours Michael Winterbottom. I, too, would be very happy with Michael, who we've met to discuss the project. I had a good working relationship with him when he directed *Love Lies Bleeding*, and he has since gone on to win a great deal of praise for *Cracker* and *Family*.

Tuesday 31 January

Tinker with *Harry d'Souza*. If I made an effort I could finish this before I leave for New York, on 7 February, to do more research on *A Further Gesture*, but I don't. Chris rings to say that Tom Rothman of Fox-Searchlight didn't greatly like Michael Winterbottom's new film, *Butterfly Kiss*. This isn't going to make pushing him with Fox-Searchlight easy.

Wednesday 1 February

David seems very keen on Arthur Penn. Chris has written to Penn to say I will be in New York next week. He's meeting John MacKenzie with Stephen tomorrow. Later, Antonia calls from LA – still working on her film. “Everything done by committee.”

Friday 3 February

To the Athenaeum to meet Chris and Claudia Lewis from Fox-Searchlight. She turns out to be a small, sparky, humorous woman in her mid-30s, nothing like the crass movie executive I had expected. Intelligent about the script and casting suggestions, and about directors. She's a big fan of Antonia's. Chris and I had talked about Michael Winterbottom – she has only heard about *Butterfly Kiss*, but she repeats that Tom Rothman wasn't impressed, even though the film has attracted a lot of praise. She asks when we think we can start filming. We say in the summer. She'd like that.

Monday 6 February

Chris calls to say that David and Stephen had dinner last night. Stephen has suggested John MacKenzie and David, to keep Stephen on board, thinks we should meet him. But Chris, who sees time going by and nothing resolved, says he wants to attract a director within a few days, and that Michael Winterbottom is top of his list. But it is going to be difficult to persuade Stephen, and we may lose Fox-Searchlight. We seem to be caught between the rock and the hard place, and not moving very far forward. I pack for New York, feeling a little gloomy.

Tuesday 14 February

New York. Meet Arthur Penn, who has read the script. I have been doubtful about this idea. He is not a young man and I didn't think his last couple of films were particularly distinguished. Perhaps he has lost what made him one of the great directors? I arrive at his apartment. He turns out to be fit, spry, alert and utterly gracious. He starts talking about the script and within minutes I realise he is right for this. He knows the characters, understands them. Most of all, he understands what I am trying to get at. Unlike Chris Gerolmo, he isn't uncomfortable with the morality or idea of the film. We talk for an hour and a half or so. I return to the hotel and call Chris. He is surprised by my reaction, not having expected it, but senses my excitement.

Thursday 16 February

Finish off the remaining bits of research: wander around Roosevelt Avenue, one of the Hispanic areas of Queens and Washington Heights in Manhattan. I am struck by the contrast between life here and life in the more affluent parts of the city. Here, people seem to live outdoors. It is life in the street, there are connections, there is activity. It will work well, I think, for *A Further Gesture* – this is the contrast I'm striving for in the film. Stephen's character, Dowd, is the man acting alone, isolated, seeking his own destiny as an individual, but he goes nowhere, he runs into the ground. Only when he reconnects with others, who are part of a community, part of a political community, does he start to pick himself up – only to encounter further problems, of course. But still, I am excited by what I see.

Sunday 19 February

London. Chris rings to say David has spoken to Arthur Penn, and was very excited about his possible involvement. Arthur will come to London next week. The problem now, however, is that Fox-Searchlight will not be interested in Arthur Penn – since they have been set up specifically to do films with new young directors. Will we be able to find another partner, along with Channel 4?

Monday 20 February

Elinor Day at the BBC rings to inquire about *Harry d'Souza*. I say it's coming along fine and will be with her on Monday 6 March. Chris rings. He has talked to Arthur Penn, "very charming". Arthur told him not to bother with too expensive a hotel – "let's keep the money for the film."

Monday 27 February

Halcyon Hotel in Holland Park to meet Chris and Arthur Penn. Arthur doesn't seem too tired after his flight and we sit up talking until after midnight. It is clear he wants to do the film. The main problem, Chris thinks, is the budget: Arthur, being who he is, will not be eligible for the union exemptions and discounts available to a relatively unknown or first-time director. Unfazed by these restrictions, Arthur has suggestions to overcome them. The New York interiors could be done in Ireland, for example, minimising the New York shoot.

Ring Stephen Rea, who is filming in Hong Kong and not having a great time by the sounds of it.

"I am now clinically insane," he says. We broach the issue of directors. Basically, Stephen wants Stephen Frears. I says this isn't possible. Anyone else? No suggestions.

Tuesday 28 February

Down to the hotel for a script meeting with Arthur and Chris. Arthur thinks the ending is contrived, the reappearance of certain characters fortuitous. He suggests I think about the middle, what is it about? If I can answer that, I will be able to find the end. All of this involves fairly radical reworking, but I like it. That night, dinner with David Aukin. Arthur and I give David an idea of the script changes we have been discussing, which he seems to like. Arthur is confident he and Stephen will get on. I have read that Arthur is considered "an actor's director". He's certainly worked with a few well known ones: Brando, Nicholson, Beatty, Hoffman.

Thursday 2 March

Chris calls to say the meeting with Stephen – he'd flown over to Heathrow from Dublin (where he's appearing in a Field Day production of *Uncle Vanya*) – had gone very well. Stephen enthusiastic and willing to do the film whenever he can. Arthur says he starts work as soon as he returns to New York.

Saturday 4 March

Have I left it too late on *The Crimes of Harry d'Souza*? Up at 7.30am and should have got to work, but instead look through the newspapers. Find the 30 or so pages I'd written six months ago not that bad. Revise them, sharpen them and press forward. By 2pm I know it's going to be all right. I have been over this story so often in my head that I am writing as fast as I can type. At times, I have to get up and walk around. Calm down, write. Stop to watch Manchester United's nine goals on *Match of the Day*.

Monday 6 March

Type *The End* around mid-day. Ring Elinor to let her know *The Crimes of Harry d'Souza* will be with her tomorrow. Print up a copy, find a jiffy bag, a friend

bikes it for me. Now begins the waiting for a response period. What if they don't like it? Maybe it's no good.

Call from David Aukin, a gentle prompt to get on with the second draft of *A Further Gesture* so they can take the Penn-Rea package to investors. I tell him it's coming along fine.

Thursday 16 March

Deliver the second draft of *A Further Gesture* (really need a title – it's embarrassing when people ask what it's called). Chris read it straight away, liked it and suggested one or two changes.

Friday 17 March

Print up the definitive version of the second draft. CSL sends copies to Roxy, Arthur and David.

Thursday 23 March

I haven't heard from Elinor and ring to see what she thought of *Harry d'Souza*. She likes it. "It's everything

you said it would be." David Thompson hasn't yet read it, though. The problem, she goes on to say, is finding the money to make it. She suggests calling back in a couple of weeks.

Arthur, David and Roxy have all responded to the second draft of *A Further Gesture*. At a script meeting at Channel 4, David and Allon make a few points, but nothing structural. There will be more work, but the most important thing is to talk to Arthur. Chris and I arrange to go to New York.

Thursday 30 March

Deliver *Ashes*.

Monday 3 April

New York. It's always two steps forward, one step back. After some promising conversations with the investors and a series of useful meetings with Arthur, a possible production manager, editor and casting agent, it turns out that Stephen, who is about to play in Neil Jordan's film about Michael Collins, won't be free until mid-August. Arthur shows signs of being irritated that he hasn't been kept abreast of this development. He'd been under the impression we could go in July. Now, if we're lucky, photography will start in September.

Steve, a production manager Arthur has worked with before, has prepared a rough schedule. Chris nearly faints when he sees the figures. But Arthur, as ever, has solutions, minimising even further the New York shoot. Although three-quarters of the film is set in New York, the shoot there may be as short as ten days. Chris and Phil, his assistant, race about the city, talking figures and number-crunching. I'm happy to leave it to them. Writers are often like farmers – they complain a lot. But, really, who would be a producer?

Further excerpts from Ronan Bennett's diary will be published later this year

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Drenched in longing

When *Captives*, which I wrote, premiered at the 1994 Venice film festival, one word leapt out at me from its Italian reviews: *Ossessione*, the title of Luchino Visconti's beautiful first film. A year earlier, as she prepared to shoot, I had talked to our director, Angela Pope, about two films which never fail to move me: one was *Ossessione*, the other Tony Richardson's *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*. Made in 1962 and written by Alan Sillitoe, this British film is one of the reasons I write screenplays.

Ossessione, made in 1942, when Italy was under Fascist rule, is based on the James Cain novel *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. It is a stunning evocation of sexual passion, far more powerful than either of the American versions of the same story. The first time we see the tramp Gino's face is the moment he sets eyes on the bar owner's beautiful young wife, Giovanna. From this meeting, the film, directed by an aristocrat-turned-communist, is near perfect.

The story is told in a brilliantly handled series of triangles. Gino and Giovanna become lovers, with her husband forever between them. Gino attempts to escape once, in a gay partnership with a fellow wanderer. He attempts to escape a second time, after the murder, with a young prostitute. But love closes in around them. As Gino says to Giovanna, "Once the world seemed a very big place; now there is only your house."

"I am interested in extreme situations," Visconti wrote. "The instants when abnormal tension reveals the truth about human beings." Watching *Ossessione*, I can never get over how quickly we in the audience also come to want Giovanna's fool of a husband out of the way, how seductive the idea of killing him becomes. And how oppressive the aftermath is, suffocating with guilt and paranoia. The truths of *Ossessione* are relentlessly hard. Even death, when it comes, contains a cruel trap.

The film itself was made in an extreme situation – cast and crew were grilled by the police, and one of its screenwriters was sent to prison. Despite this, Visconti worked at a pace unimaginable in our commercial cinema, rarely completing more than three shots in a day. Mussolini's Minister of Culture said it was a film "that stinks of latrines". Thus did the film which launched Neo-Realism begin its "tortured existence". In one town after another it was screened for a night or two before being banned – in one case, the cinema was then exorcised. "What would they think," wondered Visconti, "if they knew this was a film I sold my mother's jewellery to make?"

Ossessione is a film drenched in longing. So is *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*. It was one of the last Woodfall Films, produced by the company that director Richardson set up with playwright John Osborne. A Nottingham teenager, played by Tom Courtenay, robs a local bakery and is sent to borstal. There the governor, played by Michael Redgrave, dreams of his institution winning a race against the local public school. The new prisoner is a brilliant and cunning runner, and so begins an education

Frank Deasy, whose writing credits include 'The Grass Arena' and the newly-released 'Captives', remembers the aching needs that drive Visconti's 'Ossessione' and Richardson's 'The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner'



A harrowing world: Gino as the lover in Visconti's relentlessly hard 'Ossessione'

for both prisoner and jailer – a lesson in the fluid nature of power. Tom Courtenay is perfect, hatchet-faced, his every sense alive to the fact that the governor's cheery motto ("You play ball with us and we'll play ball with you") is a mockery of the vicious game life has played with him up until now. But the centre of the film is his aching to transcend, for life to be something greater. His face defines yearning: "I was always trying to get lost when I was a kid. I soon found out you can't get lost, though."

The climactic sequence, the moment when he can win and instead, with a melancholic venom, chooses to throw the race, is magnificent. For me, *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* is a deeply spiritual film, reaching far beyond the social realism to which critical consensus usually consigns it. It amazes me how rarely it is mentioned, or anyway mentioned positively, in accounts of British film, or new wave cinema.

I love British cinema of the 60s in a way that can seem dated in its native land. Some of the difference in meaning springs for me from the fact that a film like *Loneliness*, seen



Alone in the world: Tom Courtenay

on television while growing up in Dublin in the 70s, was an intoxicating experience. Courtenay's conflicts were electrifying, his world intensely real – there was nothing comparable in Irish drama. England then still seemed an exciting place, faster, bigger, as foreign as but more immediate than the world of *Ossessione*.

To my eyes the least interesting aspect of *Loneliness* is that it is about a young offender. Yet I know many British film-makers would find it difficult to see it as about anything other than a young offender. This is partly due to the invisible walls that run through England. I once made a documentary in the course of which a young Scottish prisoner spoke eloquently about his imprisonment, his HIV status and, most movingly, about the imminent death of his wife, whom he had unwittingly infected with the virus. After a viewing of the final cut we were told this section had to be cut if the film was to be broadcast – because it contained the word "fuck". It was hard to grasp that, to the people requesting the cut, his struggle for redemption, palpable in every word and gesture, was effectively invisible – because it was expressed in a familiar accent and in a face with the pallor of white bread and chips. His crime was to appear ordinary.

In a similar vein, it has been argued that British villains are neither good enough nor glamorous enough for movies. I know what is meant – but I think the real failure is that of writers and film-makers; a failure, or a reluctance to see beyond buckle rings and shell suits. In much the same way, I believe Britain is in danger of becoming blind to the quality of its own cinema.

Vito Mussolini, the Duce's son, stormed out of the first screening of *Ossessione*, shouting "That isn't Italy." I don't imagine there was much shouting or public brawling in Britain about *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*. I suspect a muted, more corrosive whisper was heard: "That isn't England." Or else, more destructive still: "That isn't film-making."

'Captives', written by Frank Deasy, opens on 28 April and is reviewed on page 41 of this issue



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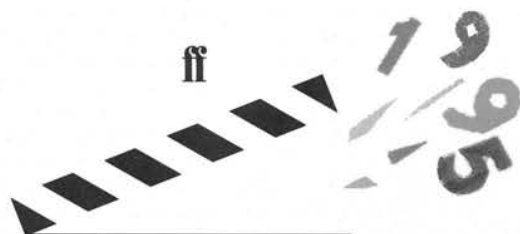
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Great gifts and terrible legacies

Simon Louvish

Projections 4

edited by John Boorman, Tom Luddy, David Thomson & Walter Donohue. Faber & Faber, £9.99 pp333 ISBN 0-571-17363-2

"Projections is a forum for film-makers in which the practitioners of cinema write about their craft." This book comes well hyped by a lecture at the NFT accompanied by a season of films to celebrate its launch. But is it worth the razzmatazz? Previous volumes have featured Sam Fuller, George Cukor, Gus Van Sant, Hal Hartley, Lawrence Kasdan, Robert Altman, Bertrand Tavernier and Quentin Tarantino, as well as the ubiquitous John Boorman, who wrote half the first issue. The centrepiece of each volume is a year's diary of film-making travails, as contributed in two issues by Boorman, in one by Francis Ford Coppola, and in the present case by screenwriter James Toback. This year's book is billed as a celebration of the centenary of film, and includes pieces by or interviews with Louis Lumière, Martin Scorsese, Arthur Penn, Ken Burns (of *The Civil War* fame, the 11-hour TV documentary series), Gene Kelly and Federico Fellini.

All this is very well as far as it goes. Scorsese is always incisive, Penn is always interesting and Fellini is always every bit as precious as lace pants: "I make a film as if I have a disease, suffering hot and cold sweats on an hourly basis, hovering constantly between ecstasy and anguish, lucidity and confusion. Everything is done in a kind of fever. Once the film is over, I fool myself into thinking I'm cured."

Other highlights include two contributions by Sidney Howard, screenwriter of *Gone With the Wind*, one revealing the mercurial whims of David O. Selznick, the other a fascinating résumé of the problems and rewards of the writer in the Hollywood studio system. There is a telling piece by Oren

Moverman composed of interviews with Louis Malle's colleagues on the production of *Vanya on 42nd Street* and a fine essay by Walter Murch on the developing concept of sound design for movies. And there is entertaining gossip with prop master Eddie Fowle on putting together productions for David Lean and working on Howard Hawks' *Land of the Pharaohs*.

What's in and what's left out will always be the problem in evaluating this kind of enterprise. After a brief reprise of a 1946 interview by Georges Sadoul with Louis Lumière, we have a segment in which a variety of cinéastes ranging from Kevin Brownlow to André de Toth answer a silly question about the greatest gift or worst legacy of the cinema, in which the best comment is Dusan Makavejev's, that "the worst was to see the world following and fulfilling the ugliest schemes and prophecies from 'B' movies," and the worst is a daft waste of paper by Percy Adlon, who does no more than repeat the line, "I love them I hate them I love them I hate them I love them I hate them I love them" until the end of the page.

This year's diary, by James Toback, screenwriter of Karel Reisz's *The Gambler* and Warren Beatty's *Bugsy* among other films, is in my view a mistake. One should respect anyone who can actually work and earn a living in this dire business, but Toback's confessions of futility and cowardice in Los Angeles' earthquake are for me a truth too far. He seems to be mooning his way around La La Land, dropping the names of his famous friends like confetti, trying lethargically to write three new scripts (and these, excerpted at the end of his piece, reveal themselves to be – at least at this stage – mediocre). John Boorman has covered this sort of ground before, and far better.

Hollywood, love it or hate it. *Projections* has in the past included non-American film-makers like Tavernier, George Miller, Jaco Van Dormael, Andrzej Wajda and Croatia's Zrinko Ogresta, but the emphasis here is overwhelmingly on American and Western European film and film-makers.

The only far-flung film-maker featured, as

far as I can see, has been Chen Kaige in issue number three. In contrast, I have before me the *Cahiers du cinéma* special issue centenary of cinema tribute, which manages, in 130 pages, to include film-makers as diverse as Mack Sennett, Frank Borzage, Dziga Vertov, Wilhelm Pabst, Jean Vigo, John Ford, Kenji Mizoguchi, Stanley Kubrick, Roger Corman, Nagisa Oshima, Abbas Kiarostami and Youssef Chahine.

Of course, it's easier to get your home-grown critics to write about the global film village than to actually track down, commission or interview these dispersed film-makers themselves. But perhaps, next time, *Projection 5* might be bold – or uncommercially foolhardy – enough to devote an issue to the kind of film-makers whose work we do, after all, have a fleeting chance to glimpse at the London Film Festival, if nowhere else. Exciting work like Gianni Amelio's stunning *Lamerica*, or Ousmane Sembène's, or Merzak Allouache's, or the explosion of film talent in today's Taiwan, or Moufida Tlatli's Tunisian *The Silences of the Palace*.

How about the film journal of an Algerian director fleeing for his life from his country and trying to create in exile? I know I can't have everything, but an analysis, a projection only of our insular limitations, can only be at best a fragment of a richer and far more exciting whole.

The sweet smell of success

David Aukin

How to Make a Successful British Movie: Or What They Don't Teach You at Film School

Barry M. Sheppard, The Birmingham Publishing Company, £19.95, 255pp ISBN 1-85616-616-3

The title of this book is something of a 'come on', though admittedly it includes some useful information. Aimed mainly at aspiring producers, it doesn't quite live up to its subtitle, but does include some handy tips, templates for contracts with cast and crew and an extensive list of contacts.

Barry Sheppard's prose style affects a gruffness, as if it were spoken through teeth clenching the proverbial producer's cigar. The book purports to give the reader the most basic 'dope' about the film business, hammered home with capital letters and bold type: "There are two types of script. GREAT AND WONDERFUL OR CRAP. *There is no between.*" Crucially, however, this book doesn't explain either how to make a specifically British film or indeed how to make a successful one. Of course, people more qualified than the author of this book have tried and failed to answer these questions. Even after four years here at Channel 4 as Head of Drama, I certainly don't have any of the answers. But then again, I'm not writing a book claiming that I do.

The underlying fantasy that informs this book is that nowadays anyone can make a movie. And why shouldn't anyone? Sheppard's line, one echoed by many others, can be paraphrased thus: "Film-making is the new rock'n'roll, just get out there and do it. Spike Lee financed his first movie on credit cards; today he's making multi-million dollar movies for Hollywood. This could be YOU." That's the fantasy. What this rather

BFI STILL POSTERS AND DESIGNS

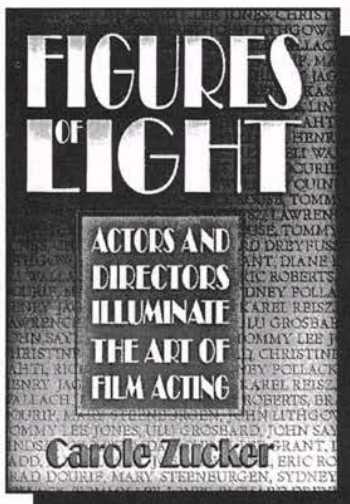


At the pinnacle of his powers: David O. Selznick, top centre, and Sidney Howard, centre right, by the camera, watch Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable on the set of *'Gone With the Wind'*

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avoids mentioning is that Spike Lee also happens to be a naturally talented filmmaker who had spent years learning his craft before his arrival in Hollywood.

It is also foolish to suggest that there is a way of making commercial films that the rest of the world, remarkably, has failed to discover. In fact the world is filled with films which no one has seen, wants to see or ever will see. The warehouses of video stores are crammed with tapes that end to end stretch to Mars and back. Does the world truly need any more of these?

Of course it does, but as far as I'm concerned, only those who have something extra to offer, rather than the simple desire to make a quick buck, need bother trying. As this book does make clear, since it's not easy to get a film made, only try if film is your passion and your life. And if it is, then welcome to this crazy world where art and commerce try to cohabit and mostly survive as some kind of dysfunctional family.

The question that then arises is, what sort of films we should be trying to make? In most areas of film-making we are not in a position to compete with Hollywood and nor, frankly, should we try. We should be making the films that Hollywood would not make, or could not make, but which, when they see them, they love. Indeed, the more British a film is, the greater its chances of standing out and being recognised in the world markets. It follows from this that our strength is to back the best talents and leave it to Hollywood to deal with the 'concepts'.

One of the best ways to learn how to make a successful British film is to go to the cinema. It is remarkable that the media's rhetoric about "the ailing British film industry" still exists, despite the significant number of successful British films. It's not just the Oscar nominations – although when was the last time when three British feature films each received major Oscar nominations in the same year?

The talent around is awesome. Antonia Bird follows up her success *Safe with Priest*. Danny Boyle (director), John Hodge (screenwriter), and Andrew Macdonald (producer) have performed the astonishing feat for a British film of recouping their production costs in the UK with *Shallow Grave*. Other successes include: Ben Ross and his remarkable debut with the *Poisoner's Handbook*; Michael Winterbottom, whose *Butterfly Kiss* created such a sensation this year at Berlin; Gurindha Chadha and Meera Syal who last year brought us the delightful *Bhaji on the Beach*; Sue Clayton, Ronan Bennett [see his diary in this month's issue], Phil Davis, the Quay brothers, all of whom are currently making films. The list, if not endless, could go on and on, and it needn't even include the 'old hands', Mike Leigh, Ken Loach and Peter Greenaway, who continue to make not only extraordinary films but ones that are also profitable. These are exciting times for British film.

Probably the only thing any of these filmmakers have in common is that none of them approach film-making with a whiff of cynicism; certainly they want their films to be successful and to be seen by as many people as possible, but their films work with audiences around the world precisely because they are not mass-produced off-the-factory-line creations. That's the way forward for our film-makers; that's the way to make a successful British film.

Girlie show

Yvonne Tasker

Immortal, Invisible: Lesbians and the Moving Image

Tamsin Wilton (ed), Routledge, £12.99, 235pp ISBN 0-415-10725-3

Our mainstream cinema and television screens may not be over-run with images of lesbians, but they're not being shunned, and invisibility is no longer the defining notion it once was. Any analysis of contemporary images of lesbians must therefore arise from the limited and rather peculiar kinds of visibility currently accorded them.

It has long been a feminist commonplace that lesbian visibility in commercial culture tends to be exploitative and therefore somehow not 'for us' – from the use of lesbian scenes in straight pornography to the rather tawdry publicity surrounding (for example) 1982's *Personal Best*. Recently, however, the eroticised and mysterious images (those that signify implicit lesbian desire) have to some extent been displaced by ones of ordinary pleasure and heartache. So how should one greet and translate the peculiar early 90s brand of lesbian chic, or think about the recent flowering of lesbian-produced porn? At another level, how does one talk about the success of the very ordinary romance that was last summer's hit, *Go Fish*? Though an independent production and filmed in black and white, a less transgressive film would be hard to imagine.

The questions that have vexed commentators are these. Do recent images of lesbians in mainstream culture simply represent a new kind of marginality? And should these trends be celebrated or rejected? Underpinning both questions is the tension between lesbianism as a sexual identity and lesbianism as a political identity. *Immortal, Invisible* attempts to analyse lesbian representation, lesbian producers and lesbian audiences, and so has first to find a critical space in which to discuss a diverse set of images – mainstream and independent, high art and lowbrow. In fact, diversity is a central idea here. Constructing a lesbian film criticism means posing and developing specific questions about content, identity and pleasure in which 'we' have an interest, whilst acknowledging that this 'we' is impossible to maintain as a cohesive unity.

A route is also negotiated through both the problematic celebrations of perversity associated with 'Queer' theory, and the straight assumptions of psychoanalytic criticism. Queer can be a rallying point for disparate views – as in Paul Burston and Colin Richardson's recent volume *A Queer Romance* – and by championing deviance has produced some challenging thinking. However, its general rhetoric has tended to position anything non-transgressive as marginal to its agenda. Wilton expresses reservations, arguing that lesbians need not be marginal to Queer, which returns us to the question of ordinary pleasures.

The approach taken in *Immortal, Invisible* is to highlight tensions between art-house or avant-garde productions which have been identified in some way as lesbian, and issues of lesbian spectatorship. It is no surprise that whilst the studies of production focus on what can be very loosely termed art films, lesbian audiences are discussed in terms of

Blade Stunner: Brigitte Nielsen in 'Red Sonja', a pin-up for lesbians



their responses to such popular films as *Desert Hearts* (1985), *Alien* (1979) and *Red Sonja* (1985). Paula Graham is puzzled why certain lesbian audiences should take pleasure in the image of Brigitte Nielsen as Red Sonja rather than identifying with the lesbian villainess. Graham's analysis of lesbian pleasures appeals to both common sense – she cites an unnamed viewer of *Basic Instinct* (1991) who asks what could be wrong with a film in which women sleep with each other and kill men – and to subversive reading practices. For Graham the answer involves an analysis of both pleasure and politics, specific to lesbian viewers.

If lesbian viewers are excluded from many fictions, difficulties are also posed by the dominant models of spectatorship derived from psychoanalysis, which is the other tradition this collection draws on, countering the freefall of Queer. I am doubtful whether the production of yet more elaborations and challenges to models of the Gaze, such as those presented here, will do anything to shift it as a paradigm. Yet the fact that Wilton and others argue effectively here against the worst excesses of psychoanalytic rhetoric is heartening. This collection represents a positive move towards the development of a lesbian criticism which is neither a subset of Queer nor an offshoot of existing feminist thought.

REVIEWS

Reviews,
synopses and
full credits for
all the month's
new films

Before the Rain (Po Dezju)

United Kingdom/France/Macedonia 1994

Director: Milcho Manchevski

Certificate

15

Distributor

Electric Pictures

Production Companies

Aim Productions
Noe Productions
Vardar Film
With the participation
of

British Screen

The European

Coproduction Fund

(UK)

in association with

PolyGram Audiovisual

The Ministry of Culture

for the Republic of

Macedonia

Producers

Judy Counihan

Cedimir Kolar

Sam Taylor

Cat Villiers

Co-producers

Frederique

Dumas-Zajdela

Marc Baschet

Gordon Tozija

Line Producer

Macedonia:

Paul Sarony

London:

Chris Thompson

Associate Producers

Sheila Fraser Milne

David Redman

Production Associate

Chloe Sizer

Macedonia Production

Supervisor

Nikola Popovic

Production Co-ordinators

Jenifer Landor

Tori Parry

Production Manager

Steve Acevski

Location Managers

Georgi

Georgievski-Joker

David Pinnington

2nd Unit Director

Nicolas Gaster

Assistant Directors

Vanja Aljinovic

Mary Soan

Finn McGrath

Filip Cemerski

Stuart Renfrew

Mone Damevski

Pre-Production:

Zoran Mladenovic

Casting

Moni Damevski

Liora Reich

Screenplay

Milcho Manchevski

Script Supervisors

Biljana Mirkovic

Renee Glynn

Director of Photography

Manuel Teran

2nd Unit Camera Operators

Dragan Salkovski

Philip Le Sourd

Simon Reeves

Steadicam Operator

Vladimir Samoilovski

Editor

Nicolas Gaster

Associate Editor

Anne Sopol

Production Designers

Sharon Lamofsky

David Munns

Set Dressers

Pance Minov

Nicole Albert

Scenic Artists

Stavre Avramovski

Boro Micevski

Storyboard Artist

Suzana Mihajlovska

Special Effects

Valentin Lozey

John Fontana

Vasil Dikov

Costume Design

Caroline Harris

Sue Yelland

Make-up/Hair

Morag Ross

Joan Hills

Titles/Opticals

Peter Govey Film

Opticals

Music

'Anastasia':

Zlatko Origjanski

Zoran Spasovski

Goran Trajkovski

Dragan Dautovski

Additional Music

Performed by

Cengiz Ibrahim

Kjazim Jashae

Daniela Tosic

Dubravka Zajkova

Senko Velinov

Vanja Lazarova

Music Producer

Frederique

Dumas-Zajdela

Tose Pop-Simonov

Music Artistic Adviser

Jaques Sanjuan

Music Archivists

Dragan B. Kostic

Charles Henri

de Pierrefeu

Sound Editor

Peter Baldock

2nd Unit Sound

Laurie McDowell

John Pardue

Dialogue Editors

Peter Elliott

Derek Holding

Dubbing Associate

Keith Lowes

ADR Consultant

Dimitar Grbevska

ADR/Foley Mixer

Ted Swanscott

Foley Editor

Polly Aitken

Sound Recordist

Aidan Hobbs

Re-recording Mixer

Hugh Strain

Foley Artists

Jack Stew

Diane Greaves

Art History/Ethnology

Consultant

Dr Kosta Balabanov

Macedonian Church

Consultant

Vladimir Kravlevski

Stunt Co-ordinators

Parvan Parvov

Rob Woodruff

Armourer

Dimitar Genin

Cast

Katrin Cartledge

Anne

Rado Serbedzija

Aleksander

Gregoire Colin

Kiril

Labina Mitevska

Zamira

Jay Villiers

Nick

Silvija Stojanovska

Hana

Phyllida Law

Anne's Mother

Josif Josifovski

Father Marko

Kiril Nistoski

Father Damjan

Petar Mirceviski

Zdrave

Ljupco Bresliski

Mitre

Igor Madzirov

Stojan

Iko Stefanovski
Bojan
Suzana Kirandziska
Neda
Katerina Kocavska
Kate
Vladimir Endrovski
Trajce
Abdurahman Salja
Zekir
Vladimir Jacev
Alija
Peter Hedham
Maitre d'
Rod Woodruff
Waiter in Fight
Aleksander Mikic
Atanas
Meto Jovanovski
Dr Saso
Cveto Mareski
Boy with Gun
Boris Belceviski
Petre
Dejan Velkov
Mate
Mladen Krstevski
Trifun
Bzemail Maksut
Kuzman
Mile Jovanovski
Priest Singing
at Funeral
Milica Stojanova
Aunt Cveta
Kiril Psaltirov
Mome
Metodi Psaltirov
Tome

Blagoja Spirkovski-
Dzumerko
Gang Leader
Sando Monev
Blagoj
Atila Klince
Sefer
Arben Kastrati
Ramiz
Banny Newman
Ian
Gabrielle Hamilton
Woman in Cab
Moni Damevski
George
Ljupco Todorovski
Kizo
Melissa Wilkes
Retarded Child
Joe Gould
Redhead Waiter
Goran
Goran
Nino Levi
Mailman
Lence Delova
Bossy Clerk
Jordan Vitanov
Policeman

10,154 feet
113 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Eastman
Partly Subtitled

'Words' - Macedonia. Kiril, a young monk, shelters Zamira, a young Albanian Muslim girl who is on the run from a bandit gang headed by Mitre. Mitre and his men turn up at the monastery and, unable to find Zamira, they set up camp outside. When Kiril and Zamira, now lovers, escape, they run into her family who force her to stay with them, dismissing Kiril. Zamira tries to follow him but is shot down by her brother.

'Faces' - London. Anne, a picture editor at a photo agency, is told she is pregnant. She must now decide whether to return to her estranged husband, Nick, or leave him for her lover, Aleksander, a Pulitzer prize-winning photographer who left his native Macedonia years ago. Aleksander has decided to return home and wants her to accompany him. She hesitates and he leaves without her. Anne meets Nick at a restaurant to tell him about the pregnancy and ask for a divorce. A dispute between a foreign visitor (possibly Macedonian) and a waiter ends with the visitor being thrown out but, moments later, he returns and guns down staff and guests. Anne survives but finds Nick dead amongst the debris.

'Pictures' - Macedonia. Aleksander arrives in his old village, first to greet him is one of Mitre's young brigands. Anne tries to contact him by phone from London. Aleksander visits his childhood sweetheart, Hana, a Muslim. For this he is treated with contempt by the Christian villagers. When one of Aleksander's cousins is found murdered, they kidnap Hana's daughter Zamira. Hana visits Aleksander in the night and pleads with him to protect Zamira. He intervenes in the dispute, but escorting Zamira away, is shot dead by one of his cousins. Anne arrives just in time to witness his murder. Zamira flees towards the local monastery.

A triptych of stories that fold into one another, *Before the Rain*'s manifest theme is "the vicious circle of violence". In part one, 'Words', there is a glimpse of Anne as she arrives to witness the shooting of Aleksander. In part two, 'Faces', she examines a photograph that intimates the same event. Manchevski (here making his feature debut) is clearly interested in such elliptical and fragmentary moments, but his imagery suggests a more obvious approach. In the Orthodox Monastery's church the camera lingers on medieval paintings depicting atrocities, emphasising that there has always been bloodlust in the name of religion. In the 'Faces' section, radio bulletins report a bomb explosion in Oxford Street as a preface to the restaurant massacre, ensuring that the audience understands that violence is never far away, even in peaceful countries.

This London section is a rusty link in the chain, as if Manchevski arrived in Britain only to have his creative judgement affected by the general malaise afflicting many recent British films. Dialogue is stilted, characterisation and acting unconvincing - even the crisp and alluring visual style that marks the Macedonian sequences is absent. London cannot offer the honey-gold colours of the Macedonian landscape, but more might have been made of the city's grey and rainy texture than monotonous indifference.

The crude contrast between the two locations heightens the impression of Macedonia as a faraway mythical place - a glossy postcard landscape with peasants wielding Uzis rather than riding donkeys. If pictorial otherworldliness was Manchevski's intention, then it is at odds with the film's implicit foregrounding of the exoticising process. In making the central character a war photographer, Manchevski begs familiar questions about the way images of war are aestheticised and the reporter's complicity in that process. Yet Aleksander, with his long grey locks and nonchalant swagger, is presented as a daredevil romantic hero, whose macho-bravado echoes that of his war-mongering cousins. Thus a shorthand debate never develops beyond a few perfunctory jottings.

Written all over the film (whether or not the director is aware of it) is a revealing essay on gender and war. There is a certain instability around the women characters: they appear as phantoms in the dreams of both Kiril and Aleksander. Anne is a spectral witness to the carnage in London and Macedonia - her white dress just waiting to be stained red. Zamira appears and disappears with catlike stealth; she is accused of killing a shepherd while he was tending his sheep - a very feline crime. Called "slut" and "whore" by the male members of her family, she is also accused of starting the conflict. What then, do we make of a particularly explosive moment when a cat is shot to pieces? In a film full of loaded symbolism, this is perhaps the most telling image of all.

Lizzie Francke

Boys on the Side

USA 1995

Director: Herbert Ross

Certificate

15

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Le Studio Canal +/Regency Enterprises/Alcor Films present

A New Regency/Hera production

Executive Producers

Don Roos

Patricia Karlan

Producers

Arnon Milchan

Steven Reuther

Herbert Ross

Co-producer

Patrick McCormick

Associate Producer

Russ Kavanagh

Production Associate

Elizabeth W. Alexander

Production Supervisor

Tom Briggs

Production Co-ordinators

Monica Melvin-Fratkin

Tuscon:

Diane Gutterud

Pittsburgh:

Lisa Bradley

NY:

James Bradley

Unit Production Managers

Patrick McCormick

NY/Pittsburgh:

Carl Clifford

Location Manager

Richard Davis Jr

Location Supervisor

Scott Hornbacher

Assistant Directors

Barry Thomas

Nandi Bowe

Hilbert Hakim

NY/Pittsburgh:

Bill Conner

Casting

Hank McCann

ADR Voice:

Barbara Harris

Screenplay

Don Roos

Script Supervisor

B. J. Bjorkman

Director of Photography

Donald E. Thorin

Additional Photography

John M. Stephens

David Dunlap

Camera Operators

Frederic J. Smith

Helicopter:

Ron Goodman

NY/Pittsburgh:

David M. Dunlap

Richard Mingalone

Opticals

Pacific Title

Editor

Michael R. Miller

Production Designer

Ken Adam

Art Directors

William F. O'Brien

NY/Pittsburgh:

Charlie Beal

Set Design

James Bayliss

Jann K. Engel

Stephen Berger

Set Decorators

Rick Simpson

NY/Pittsburgh:

Debra Schutt

Set Dressers

Christopher Hayes

Gary Kudroff

John A. Scott III

Luigi S. Mugavero

NY/Pittsburgh:

John Scoppa Jr

Chris Vogt

Rick Nielsen

Ronald T. Vonblomberg

Storyboard Artist

David J. Negroni Sr

Special Effects

Dale L. Martin

Conrad Brink

Costume Design

Gloria Gresham

Wardrobe Supervisors

Chuck Velasco

Linda Matthews

Key Make-up Artists

Michael Germain

Fern Buchner

Body Make-up

Jean Fielder

Hairstylists

Julia Walker

Angel De Angelis

Title Design

Pittard Sullivan

Fitzgerald

Music

David Newman

Orchestrations

David Newman

Chris Boardman

Executive Music Producer

Clive Davis

Music Producers

Joel Moss

Jimmy Vivino

Music Supervisor

Mitchell Leib

Music Editors

Tom Kramer

Sally Boldt

Music Co-ordinator

Hope Stolley Sugarman

Songs/Music Extracts

"Piece of My Heart"

by Jerry Rogovoy, Bert

Burns, "Superstar" by

Leon Russell, Bonnie

Bramlett, performed

by Whoopi Goldberg;

"Why" by and

performed by Annie

Lennox; "Close to You",

"Raindrops Keep

Falling on My Head"

by Burt Bacharach, Hal

David; "Willow" by and

performed by Joan

Armstrong; "Dreams"

by Noel Hogan, Delores

O'Reardon, performed

by The Cranberries;

"The Way We Were"

by Alan Bergman,

Marilyn Bergman,

Marvin Hamlisch;

"Magic Carpet Ride"

by Rushmore Moreau,

performed by Boxing

Gandhi; "Crossroads"

by Robert Johnson,

performed by Jonell

Mosser; "Keep on

Growing" by Eric

Clapton, Bobby

Whitlock, performed

by Sheryl Crow;

"Somebody Stand By

Me" by Sheryl Crow,

Todd Wolf, performed

by Stevie Nicks; "Ol'

55" by Tom Waits,

performed by Sarah

McLachlan; "Shame,

Shame, Shame" by

Sylvia Robinson,

performed by Shirley

& Co.; "Everyday is Like

Sunday" by Morrissey,

performed by the

Pretenders; "Joking"

by Amy Ray,

"Southland in the

Springtime", "Power

of Two" by Emily

Saliers, performed by

Indigo Girls; "Jailhouse

Rock" by Jerry Leiber,

Mike Stoller,

performed by Elvis

Presley; "Half and Half"

by Leon Russell, Bonnie

Bramlett, performed

by The Desert Suns;

"Take Me to the River"

by Al Green, Mabon

Hodges, performed by

Toni Childs; "Officer

and a Gentleman" by

Jack Nitzsche; "Mellow

Yellow" by Donovan

Leitch, performed by

Tito and the Gang;

"You Got It" by Jeff

Lynne, Roy Orbison,

Tom Petty, performed

by (1) Whoopi

Goldberg, (2) Bonnie

Raitt; "I Take You With

Me" by and performed

by Melissa Etheridge

Choreography

Ballet Azteca:

Oscar Villella

Folkloric Dance

Co ordinator:

Ruben Moreno

Supervising Sound Editor

John Nutt

Dialogue Editors

Patrick Dodd

Scott Levitin

Mark Levinson

Joan E. Chapman

Sara Bolder

Jeff Watts

Foley Editor

Marjorie L. Hagar

Sound Mixer

Jim Webb

Music Re-recorder

Bob Schaper

Music Mixer

Bobby Fernandez

Dolby stereo

consultant:

Daniel Sperry

Supervising Re-recorder

Mark Berger

Sound Effects Re-recording

Michael Semanick

Foley Re-recorders

Linda Lew

Jeremy Molod

Post-production Recorder

Larry Ellena

Sound Effects Editors

Ernie Fosselius

Jennifer Ware

Michael Silvers

Foley Artists

Margie O'Malley

Jennifer Myers

Stunt Co-ordinator

Phil Neilson

Film Extracts

The Way We Were (1973)

An Officer and a

Gentleman (1981)

Cast

Whoopi Goldberg

Jane DeLuca

Mary Louise Parker

Robin Nickerson

Holly

Matthew McConaughey

Abe Lincoln

James Remar

Alex

Billy Wirth

Nick

Anita Gillette

Elaine

Dennis Boutsikaris

Massarelli

Estelle Parsons

Louise

Amy Aquino

Anna

Stan Egi

Henry

Stephen Gevedon

Johnny Figgis

Disappointed with life in New

York, club singer/musician Jane

DeLuca answers Robin Nickerson's

advertisement for a woman to help her

drive across country. Robin is white,

heterosexual and likes The Carpenters

whereas Jane is black, a lesbian, and

likes Janis Joplin. She is hesitant about

Robin's offer, but succumbs when her

own car is towed away.

In Pittsburgh, the women visit Holly,

an old friend of Jane's. When Holly's

Amy Ray

Emily Saliers

Indigo Girls

Jude Ciccolella

Jerry

Bullets Over Broadway

USA 1994

Director: Woody Allen

Certificate
15

Distributor
Buena Vista

Production Companies
Magnolia
production/Sweetland
Films

Executive Producers
Jean Doumanian
J.E. Beaucaire

Co-executive producers
Jack Rollins
Charles H. Joffe
Letty Aronson

Producer
Robert Greenhut

Co-producer
Helen Robin

Associate Producer
Thomas Reilly

Production Co-ordinator
Scott Kordish

Production Managers
Jonathan Filley
Helen Robin

Location Manager
Dana Robin

Assistant Directors
Thomas Reilly
Richard Patrick

Casting
Juliet Taylor
Associate:
Laura Rosenthal

Screenplay
Woody Allen
Douglas McGrath

Script Supervisor
Kay Chapin

Director of Photography
Carlo Di Palma

Camera Operator
Dick Mingalone

Editor
Susan E. Morse

Production Designer
Santo Loquasto

Art Director
Tom Warren

Set Decorators
Susan Bode
Amy Marshall

Set Dresser
Dave Weinman

Scenic Artist
James Sorice

Costume Design
Jeffrey Kurland

Wardrobe Supervisors
Michael Adkins
Patricia Eiben

Make-up
Joe Campayno
Frances Kolar

Hairstylists
Romaine Greene
Werner Scherer

Titles
The Effects House

Music performed by
Three Deuces
Musicians:
Philip Bodner
Sidney Cooper
Raymond Beckenstein
John Frosk
Randall Sandke
George Masso
Daniel Barrett
John Mical
Don Butterfield
Ted Sommer
Derek Smith
Cynthia Sayer
Yuval Waldman
Carmel Malin
Stanley Kurtis
Three Deuces Vocalists:
Emily Bindiger
Michelle Lewis
Annette Sanders
Cindy Cobitt
Jenna Miles
Chrissy Faith

Helen Miles
Arlene Martell

Music Conductor/
Music Arrangements
Dick Hyman

Music Co-ordinator
Joe Malin

Songs/Music Extracts
"Toot, Toot, Tootsie!
(Goodbye)" by Gus
Kahn, Ernie Erdman,
Dan Russo, performed
by Al Johnson, The
Vitaphone Orchestra;
"Ma (He's Making Eyes
at Me)" by Sidney Clare,
Con Conrad, performed
by Eddie Cantor,
Henry Rene and His
Orchestra; "You've
Got to See Mamma
Ev'ry Night Or You
Can't See Mamma At
All" by Billy Rose, Con
Conrad, "Nagasaki"
by Harry Warren, Mort
Water, performed by
The Three Deuces
Musicians and Singers;
"Make Believe" by
Jerome Kern, Oscar
Hammerstein II,
"You Took Advantage
of Me", "Thou Swell"
by Richard Rodgers,
Lorenz Hart, "When
the Red Robin Comes
Bob, Bob Bobbin'
Along" by Harry
Woods, "That Certain
Feelings" by George
Gershwin, Ira
Gershwin, performed
by The Three Deuces
Musicians; "That Jungle
Jamboree" by Andy
Razaf, Harry Brooks,
Thomas 'Fats' Waller,
performed by Duke
Ellington; "Singin' the
Blues Till My Daddy
Comes Home" by Con
Conrad, Sam Lewis,
J. Russel Robinson,
Joe Young, "At the
Jazz Band Ball" by D.J.
LaRocca, Larry Shields
performed by Bix
Beiderbecke; "Lazy
River" by Hoagy
Carmichael, Sidney
Arodin, performed by
New Leviathan Oriental
Fox Trot Orchestra;
"Poor Butterfly" by
Raymond Hubbell,
John Golden,
performed by Red
Nichols and His Five
Pennies; "Let's
Misbehave" by Cole
Porter, performed by
Irving Aaronson and
His Commanders;
"Crazy Rhythm" by
Irving Caesar, Joseph
Meyer, Roger Wolfe
Kahn, performed by
Roger Wolfe Kahn and
His Orchestra; "Who"
by Jerome Kern, Otto
A. Harbach, Oscar
Hammerstein II,
performed by George
Olsen & His Music

Choreography
Graciela Daniele

Supervising Sound Editor
Bob Hein

Foley Supervisor
Bruce Pross

Production Sound Mixer
James Sabat

Sound Recordist
Frank Graziadei

Music Recording Supervisor
Walter Levinsky
Dolby stereo
consultant:
Bradford L. Hohle
Re-recording Mixer
Lee Dichter

Cast
John Cusack
David Shayne
Jack Warden
Julian Marx
Tony Sirico
Rocco
Chazz Palminteri
Cheech
Joe Viterelli
Nick Valenti
Jennifer Tilly
Olive Neal
Rob Reiner
Sheldon Flender
Marie-Louise Parker
Ellen
Dianne Wiest
Helen Sinclair
Harvey Fierstein
Sid Loomis
Jim Broadbent
Warner Purcell
Tracey Ullman
Eden Brent
Victor Colicchio
Lou Eppolito
Gene Canfield
Pete Castellotti
John Dibeneditto
Johnny Ventimiglia
Waterfront Hoods
Lisa Arturo
Rachel Black
Alison Cramer
Kelly Groninger
Jennifer Lamberts
Carol Lee Meadows Mitchell
Jo Telford
Meghan Strange
Leigh Torlage
Debra Wiseman
Three Deuces
Chorus Line
Paul Herman
Maitre'd
James Reno
Sal

Stacey Nelkin
Rita
Margaret Sophie Stein
Lili
Charles Cragin
Rifkin
Gerald E. Dolezar
Café Waiter
Nina Sonya Peterson
Josette
Shannah Laumeister
Fran McGee
Movie Theatre Victims
Annie-Joe Edwards
Venus
Brian McConnachie
Mitch Sabine
Edie Falco
Lorna
Kernan Bell
Speakeasy Waiter
Hope W. Sacharoff
Hilda Marx
Debi Mazar
Vi
Nick Iacovino
Frank Aquilino
Hoods
Sam Ardeshir
Molly Regan
Helen's Party Guests
Phil Stein
Stagehand
John Doumanian
Bayle Haddon
Backstage Wellwishers
Tony Barrow
Aldo
Howard Erskine
Denay Venuta
Ken Roberts
Theatre Wellwishers
Jennifer Van Dyck
Olive's Understudy
Peter McRobbie
Man at Theatre

New York, the 20s. David Shayne, an aspiring, idealistic young playwright, is determined to direct his new play himself. Unexpectedly, producer Julian Marx tells him that he has backing – from mobster Nick Valenti, whose volatile and talentless girlfriend Olive Neal has ambitions to be an actress; the only condition is that Olive must play a lead. David and Marx approach grandiose, heavy-drinking Broadway star Helen Sinclair for a role. Rehearsals start: among the cast are dapper English leading man Warner Purcell, a compulsive eater, and irrepressibly chirpy actress Eden Brent. Olive is accompanied by Cheech, whom Valenti has assigned as her bodyguard, and who makes his threatening presence felt from the stalls.

David increasingly spends time with Helen, who captivates him with her flamboyant thespian glamour. Cheech begins to offer his own suggestions for the play, to David's dismay and the cast's general approval. While Cheech's back is turned, Olive and Warner begin a furtive affair. At a speakeasy, David runs into Cheech; the two make peace and Cheech begins to take even more of a hand, effectively becoming David's mentor and suggesting further changes, which David now eagerly incorporates. David embarks on a full-blown affair with Helen. Cheech tells Warner to keep away from Olive and

the actor responds by going on an eating binge.

As the play gets under way, prior to its New York run, Cheech, increasingly possessive of 'his' work, becomes enraged by Olive's hopeless acting; at one performance she is replaced by an understudy and the play improves. Valenti demands more lines for Olive; furious, Cheech takes her away and shoots her dead. David confronts him, but Cheech will brook no debate. David's girlfriend Ellen, who by now suspects his affair with Helen, reveals she has become involved with their bohemian friend Sheldon Flender – formerly David's guru. Valenti, suspecting Cheech of Olive's murder, has his men follow him to the play's Broadway opening; Cheech is killed, and the critics assume that the gunshots are a brilliant dramatic touch. David has showdown with Ellen and Flender; he tells her he knows he is no artist. She agrees to return to Pittsburgh and marry him.

The last two lines of *Bullets Over Broadway* are a *reductio ad absurdum* of the eternal happy ending. The hero walks with his true love into a presumably duller but happier future: "Will you marry me?" – "Yes". However cynical we might expect Woody Allen to be about connubial bliss, this gentle up-turn seems unequivocal. Allen here seems to be celebrating his own reconciliation with the well-made play. Allen's lightest work for some time, *Bullets Over Broadway* is an unabashed entertainment with few of those troubling speculations on mortality that marked even such gentle exercises as *The Purple Rose of Cairo* and *A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy*. Fresher and funnier than *Manhattan Murder Mystery*, the film might not provide that much grist for Allen's auteurist constituency, but it's enormously winning.

As a spectacle this is something like a scaled-down version of *The Cotton Club*, with a touch of *Some Like It Hot* in its flipness about gangland. As a backstage comedy, *Bullets* is all about putting on a show. Where recent Allen films have been self-consciously concerned with the textures of film – the expressionist pastiche of *Shadows and Fog*, the cinema vérité wobble of *Husbands and Wives* – *Bullets* largely takes cinema for granted, concentrating instead on stagecraft. Allen seems to be thinking theatrically these days: he recently directed a television version of his 1966 stage play *Don't Drink the Water* – an unsuccessful venture, by all accounts – as well as contributing a one-acter to a portmanteau off-Broadway show with David Mamet and Elaine May. But here we see a different kind of stagecraft. His cast is required not to underplay, but to let rip with fruity caricature. *Bullets* is peopled with comic ready-mades: Jim Broadbent's old-school British thesp, his gallantry hiding a core of bulimic hysteria; Tracey Ullman's frantically nice fusspot; and Jennifer Tilly's witless flapper, a role she makes work by turning up the screeching volume. It's a telling role, though, demonstrating

how radically Allen's approach to acting is at odds with his hero's; Olive ruins the play by being intractably bigger-than-life, Tilly adds to the film by overdoing it.

Acting the part versus being it is the film's central opposition. Pittsburgh boy David yearns to be a New York playwright, but he's not sure what role suits him best. He is as much a fish out of water amid the uptown swank of Helen's world as he is in the boho circle where his mentor Sheldon pontificates about the artist making "his own moral universe". That the film is primarily about performance is exemplified by Dianne Wiest's wildly histrionic turn as the diva who saves her highest ham for offstage, constantly swooning with Sarah Bernhardt hauteur. Her refrain, "No! Don't speak!", gets funnier with further over-use.

There are some more traditional Allen obsessions at work too. *Bullets* is an inversion of *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, in which fiction stepped off the screen and into the real; here the real takes a hand and rewrites imagination. It's a fresh take also on *Amadeus*: an idealistic slogger who believes passionately in his calling is ignominiously upstaged by a hugely talented newcomer who couldn't give a toss for 'art', but can't help being himself.

In presenting Cheech's argument that artists should just "be themselves", Allen is acting out his own attempt to balance the requirements of working in genre against the imperative to be himself. David writes what he thinks is a Broadway play, something stilted and impersonal; Cheech proves that a work should thrive on the idiosyncratic rhythms that an artist can't help producing. Hence, at the end, the film ditches the Broadway stereotypes to round off with a consummate Allen moment – a showdown between thinking lovers, which suddenly sends us straight back to the twitchy, mock-learned disputations of *Shadows and Fog*.

Bullets Over Broadway therefore engages in a commercial debate about what film should be doing, and whom it should be trying to please. David starts off trying to please the producers, then ends up having to do justice to the demands of art, even if it's someone else's. Cheech may be Mozart to his Salieri, but he's a killer, and becomes most fully evil the minute he becomes inspired by, and possessive of, his own writing. Sheldon, meanwhile, is a man of such integrity that none of his work ever gets produced; his posing is simply a pretext for moral slobbishness, but he's a sorry shadow of Cheech, who horrifically fulfils Sheldon's prescription for the artist forging his own ethical code.

Yet it's tempting to think that once David admits at last, "I'm not an artist", then he may yet get to be a playwright. There is, after all, more ambivalence in Allen's 'happily ever after' than is immediately apparent; this gentle farce may even be softening us up for stronger philosophical fare yet to come.

Jonathan Romney

Captives

United Kingdom 1994

Director: Angela Pope

Certificate

15

Distributor

Entertainment

Production Company

BBC Films

A Distant Horizon

production

Executive Producer

Mark Shivas

Anant Singh

Producer

David M. Thompson

Associate Producer

Ian Hopkins

Production Executives

Geoffrey Paget

Sudhir Pragee

Paul Janssen

Production Co-ordinator

Lucy Ainsworth-Taylor

Location Manager

Adam Richards

Post-production

Co-ordinator

Susanne Hamilton

2nd Unit Director

David Taylor

Assistant Directors

Melanie Dicks

Clare Nicholson

Robert Rabbri

William Booker

Pip Short

Martin Carley

Casting

Gail Stevens

Associate:

Andy Pryor

Screenplay

Frank Deasy

Script Supervisor

Marissa Cowell

Script Editors

Asmaa Pizada

Elinor Day

Director of Photography

Remi Adefarasin

Visual Effects

Stuart Brisdon

Opticals

Peerless Camera

Company

Editor

Dave King

Production Designer

Stuart Walker

Art Director

Diane Dancklefsen

Costume Design

Odile Dicks-Mireaux

Make-up/Hair Design

Jan Sewell

Title Design

Chris Allies

Music

Colin Towns

Songs

"(You're the) Devil

in Disguise" by

Giant, Baum, Kaye;

"That's Alright" by

Crudup; "Heartbreak

Hotel" by Mae Boren

Axton, Tommy Durben,

Elvis Presley

Dialogue Editor

Stewart Henderson

Foley Editor

Russell Eatough

Sound Recordists

Stuart Moser

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Robin Odonoghue

Dominic Lester

Sound Effects Editors

Chris Hainstock

Ian Merrylees

Foley Artists

Jack Stew

Diane Greaves

Stunt Co-ordinators

Clive Curtis

Wayne Michaels

Armourer

David Coatsworth

Cast

Julia Ormond

Rachel Clifford

Tim Roth

Philip Chaney

Richard Hawley

Sexton

Jeff Nuttall

Harold

Kenneth Cope

Dr Hockley

Keith Allen

Lenny

Bill Moody

Surgery Officer

Peter Capaldi

Simon

Siohnan Redmond

Sue

Christina Collingridge

Katie

Victoria Scarborough

Dental Nurse

Aedin Moloney

Supermarket Checker

Tricia Thorns

Prison Receptionist

Nathan Bambuza

Moses

Colin Salmon

Towler

Annette Badland

Maggie

Cathy Murphy

Companion

Mark Strong

Kenny

Sandra James-Young

Angie

Sharon Hines

Melissa

Julian Maud

Escort Officer/

Newsreader

Anthony Kernan

Blackie

Tony Curran

Spider

Joe Tucker

Con

James Hooton

Trustee Prisoner

Steve Swinscoe

Officer A

Catherine Sanderson

Coffeshop Waitress

David MacCreedy

Officer B

Douglas McFerran

Officer C

Shaheen Khan

Estate Agent

Shend

Gus

Gilbert Martin

Bulldog Officer

Michael L. Blair

Shaved Head/

Hare Krishna

David Hounslow

Detective

8,981 feet

100 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Rank Film



Is is safe?: Julia Ormond, Tim Roth

Recently separated from her husband, dentist Rachel Clifford takes a part-time job at a prison where she is attracted to one of her patients, Philip Chaney. Bumping into Philip at a supermarket one day, she learns that he is let out once a week on day-release to go to college. At the next surgery, Philip slips her a note asking her to come and see him on visiting day; she goes and is recognised by another prisoner, Towler.

Rachel and Philip start meeting in the café by Southgate tube station, where he is dropped off on his college days; they have sex in the toilets. Worried by her deepening involvement, Rachel checks Philip's prison record, but it is blank; from a newspaper cutting at a public library she discovers that he murdered his wife, and decides she must stop seeing him. Towler confronts Philip in his cell and tells him to persuade Rachel to bring a package of drugs into the prison for him; if she refuses, Towler will have her raped by his henchman Kenny who has observed one of their meetings at the café.

When Rachel tracks down Philip at his college to break off the relationship, Philip tells her about Towler's proposition. After threats from Kenny, she agrees to take the package into the prison. Once safely inside, however, she discovers that it contains a gun. Refusing to hand it over to Towler, she tells Philip, who smashes his cell so that he will be taken to see the Governor, giving him a chance to alert the police. Rachel, meanwhile, is followed to the café by Kenny; cornered, she shoots him in self-defence as the police arrive. Learning that Philip is being transferred to a prison on the Isle of Wight for his part in the affair, Rachel decides to continue visiting him.

Great moments of dentistry in the movies tend to be played for horror (*Marathon Man*), comedy (W. C. Fields' *The Dentist*), or both (*The Little Shop Of Horrors*). But *Captives* probes that strange mixture of intimacy – the fingers in the mouth, the invasion of personal space – and pain that makes a trip to the dentist such an uncomfortable, perplexing experience.

The heart of *Captives* is in the scenes where Rachel examines Philip in the dentist's chair (she is measuring his mouth for a guard to stop him grinding his teeth while asleep, hence the frequency of his visits). The erotic

charge of their stolen kisses and caresses – in particular, the lingering moment when Philip sucks Rachel's finger – is enhanced by the design of the prison surgery, which has a large window so that dentist and patient are constantly overlooked by staff and inmates, and also by the threat of violence. "You could take someone's eye out with that," says Towler of one of Rachel's nastier-looking implements, which Philip later steals and attacks him with. It also seems significant that Rachel's estranged husband Simon used to share her practice, suggesting a further link between dentistry and sex; Rachel finds both more fulfilling with Philip.

Captives was originally to have been called *The Prisoner*, the more ambiguous plural title implying that Rachel too is trapped, not just by her passion but by the necessity of living it out entirely in public. It's surely no accident that, like the lovers in *Brief Encounter*, Rachel and Philip have their assignations at a café by a station. As in writer Frank Deasy's previous script, *The Grass Arena*, life on the streets of London seems barely less grim than life inside. But the hint that the city is just a larger-scale prison is never picked up in visual terms. Despite it being shot partially inside Wandsworth Prison, *Captives* has a disappointingly flat, naturalistic look that betrays its BBC origins.

This is Angela Pope's first feature film, but she has an impressive record in television drama, notably the 1987 Aids drama *Sweet As You Are* with Liam Neeson and Miranda Richardson. What she lacks in visual flair, she more than makes up for in the subtlety of the performances drawn from her leads. Tim Roth and Julia Ormond are both more interesting here than in recent, flashier Hollywood roles. As Philip, an unusually low-key Roth exudes a compelling blend of violence, sexiness and bruised sensitivity that you can't quite imagine any other actor pulling off. He's perfectly matched by Ormond, whose tentative, slightly wounded air is much more convincing here than in *Legends Of The Fall*, where she just seems overwhelmed. The supporting performances are also absorbing too, particularly Keith Allen in one of his borderline-psycho comic turns as Lenny, the violent Elvis obsessive who thinks the prison dentists are stealing his gold fillings.

John Wrathall

Circle of Friends

Eire/USA 1995

Director: Pat O'Connor

Certificate

15

Distributor

Rank

Production Company

A Price Entertainment/

Lantana production

In association with

Savoy Pictures

With financial

assistance from

Bord Scannán na

héireann/The Irish Film

Board/Good Girls

Productions

Executive Producers

Terence Clegg

Irish Film Board:

Rod Stoneman

Producers

Arlene Sellers

Alex Wintsky

Frank Price

In Charge of Production

Terence Clegg

Co-producer

Kenith Trodd

Production Co-ordinator

Leila Kirkpatrick

Production Managers

Emma Fallon

Unit:

Gemma Fallon

Location Manager

John Phelan

Assistant Directors

Terence Clegg

Mark Goddard

Guy Heeley

Catherine Dunne

Casting

Mary Selway

Simone Ireland

Screenplay

Andrew Davies

Based on the novel by

Maeve Binchy

Script Supervisor

Libbie Barr

Director of Photography

Ken MacMillan

Additional Photography

Seamus Cocoran

Camera Operator

Andy Chmura

Editor

Jim Jympson

Production Designer

Jim Clay

Art Director

Chris Seagers

Set Decorator

Judy Farr

Draughtsman

Miraphora Mina

Scenic Artists

Brian Bishop

Doug Bishop

Costume Design

Anushia Nieradzick

Make-up

Dorka Nieradzick

Carmel Jackson

Elaine Davis

Titles/Opticals

General Screen

Enterprises

Music

Michael Kamen

Music Performed by

London Metropolitan

Orchestra

The Chieftains

Ronan Brown

Music Editors

Dina Eaton

Christopher Brooks

Music Co-ordinator

Bill Whelan

Music Consultant

Gerry Walsh
Mr Flood
Gwynne McEvee
Rosemary
Marguerite Drea
Sheila
Elizabeth Keller
Sobbing Girl
Tanya Cawley
Rugby Girl
Edward Manning
Paul Mahon
Dervla O'Farrell
Benny, Age 10
Pamela Cardillo
Nan, Age 10
Louise Maher
Eve, Age 10
Karen O'Neill
Elaine Dunphy
Emma Lannon
Little Girls

Margaret O'Neill
Maureen Lyster
Eliza Bear
Nuns
Niamh O'Byrne
Dancing Girl
Phil Kelly
Hibernian Waiter
Brendan Conroy
Priest

9,225 feet
102 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor

● Ireland, the early 50s. Three young girlfriends, Nan, Eve, and Bennie, are confirmed together in the small village of Knockglen. Shortly after, Nan and her family move away. In the autumn of 1957, Eve and Bennie are delighted to bump into her again, enrolling at college in Dublin. Nan is more worldly-wise than her old friends. Eve, an orphan, has been raised by nuns, while Bennie must get the bus home every night to her parents, who are hell-bent on marrying her off to the repulsive Sean, who works in her father's drapery business.

Nan introduces Bennie to college rugby star Jack Foley. She swiftly falls for the handsome medical student, and after an anxious evening observing him at a dance, she finds that her feelings are reciprocated. Eve and her new boyfriend Aidan do up the cottage where Eve's parents once lived and have a party. Exacerbated by college lectures about primitive tribes in which the sexes mingle freely, the young women's carnal inclinations rub up against the strictures of Catholicism. Nan uses the cottage for illicit assignments with Simon, a local Protestant landlord. Bennie falls out with her parents over her dislike of Sean, but when her father dies of a heart attack, she is forced to stay away from college and work in his shop.

Nan discovers she is pregnant, and is horrified when Simon tells her she is not rich enough for him to marry. She takes advantage of a drunken Jack's separation from Bennie to seduce him, and then convinces him that he is responsible for her condition and must marry her. Regretfully but honourably, he agrees, breaking Bennie's heart. At Nan's insistence, the unhappy couple attend another party at Eve's cottage. Eve confronts Nan with her suspicions that she had been using the cottage with Simon, and Nan turns away and puts her arm through a window. Only prompt action by Jack saves her life, and also allays his doubts that medicine is the career for him. Sean tries to force his attentions on Bennie, but she shrugs him off. In the struggle she comes upon the stash of money he had embezzled from her father's business. Nan having run away to England, Bennie agrees to let Jack woo her again, and eventually becomes a successful writer.

● Maeve Binchy apparently advises regular readers, curious as to how this film will compare to the novel *Circle of Friends* on which Andrew Davies' screenplay is based, to "be prepared for the sex!" Regular cinemagoers, unfamiliar with the improving tone of Ms Binchy's literary oeuvre, might equally well be warned to look out for the chastity.

This is not to say that the female principals of this warm-hearted if somewhat rudimentary rites-of-passage saga are wholly devoid of feistiness, just that in the end the principle is very much one of virtue rewarded. Caught in the middle of an awkward triangle—college lectures on the sexual freedom of primitive tribes, stern words from the papist pulpit, and enrapturing cinematic visions of Marlon Brando and Eva Marie Saint in *On the Waterfront*—our heroine's determination to do the right thing ultimately earns her the right to pre-marital gratification: "Bless me father, for I have sinned".

Circle of Friends has what is technically termed a *Stand By Me* structure: the narrator sets the tone—"Eve was an orphan, raised by the nuns, but you know that only made her special"—then wanders off to the newsgagents to buy a packet of crisps, returning just in time for the denouement to confirm that he or she has now become a successful writer. Minnie Driver handles this tricky assignment with considerable aplomb as the well-meaning and resourceful Bennie, managing to convey a real sense of innocence with no concomitant dimness of wit.

There is nothing innocent about the single-mindedness with which this film is directed at the international market. Barely a line of dialogue goes by without a shifting backdrop of bustling period street-scene, a babbling brook or a misty hillside, while Michael Kamen's score wears its shamrock on its sleeve with almost comical commitment. The screenplay has its fair share of tourist board Irishry too: the breathless giggling of trios of brash young Irish women is becoming something of a cinematic cliché post Roddy Doyle, and I'm not sure how convincing everybody saying "altogether" at the end of every sentence is as a signifier of Gaelic warmth.

More worrying and in view of director Pat O'Connor's pedigree (he made the well-received Troubles drama *Cal*), quite surprising, is the fact that only one of the six main roles is played by an Irish actor. The accents of the ethno-tourists are not bad to the inexperienced ear, and a bravura performance from a surely Hollywood-bound Alan Cumming as the lizard-like Sean all but steals the show. But accepting that the casting of doe-eyed American Chris O'Donnell in the male lead was probably vital for the film's financing and chances of a proper US distribution it would have been a nice touch to compensate with a young Irishman replacing Colin Firth as the uptight Anglo.

Ben Thompson

Clerks

USA 1994

Director: Kevin Smith

Certificate
18
Distributor
Artificial Eye
Production Company
View Askew Productions
Producers
Scott Mosier
Kevin Smith
Post-production Supervisor
Charlie McClellan
Screenplay
Kevin Smith
Continuity
Tara Daust
Director of Photography
David Klein
Camera Operator
David Klein
Editors
Kevin Smith
Scott Mosier
Make-up
Leslie Hope
Titles
REI Media Group
Music
Scott Angley
Music Supervisor
Benji Gordon
Songs/Music Extracts
"Clerks" by S. Smyth,
S. Angley, "Berserker"
by S. Smyth, S. Angley,
K. Smith, performed
by Love Among Freaks;
"Kill the Sex Player"
by and performed by
Girls Against Boys;
"Got Me Wrong" by
J. Cantrell, performed
by Alice In Chains;
"Making Me Sick"
by T. Stinson,
G. Gershunoff,
R. Bradbury, performed
by Bash & Pop;
"Chewbacca" by Art,
Hank, Dave, performed
by Supernova; "Panic
In Cicero" by and
performed by The
Jesus Lizard; "Shooting
Star" by P. Rodgers,
performed by Golden
Smog; "Leaders and
Followers" by G.
Graffin, performed
by Bad Religion;
"Violent Mood Swings
(Thread Mix)" by
W. Flakus, J. Sellers,
D. Sycott, S. Zechman,
performed by
Stabbing Westward;
"Big Problems" by
R. Mullins, W. Weatherman, performed by
Seaweed; "Can't Even
Tell (Theme from
Clerks)" by D. Pirner,
performed by Soul
Asylum
Sound Editors
Scott Mosier
James von Buelow
Sound Mixer
James von Buelow
Cat Wrangler
Vincent Pereira
Cast
Brian O'Halloran
Dante Hicks
Jeff Anderson
Randal
Marilyn Ghigliotti
Veronica
Lisa Spoonauer
Caitlin
Jason Mewes
Jay
Kevin Smith
Silent Bob
Scott Schiaffo
Chewlie's Rep

Scott Mosier
William the Idiot Man-
child/Angry Hockey
Playing Customer/
Angry Mourner
Al Berkowitz
Old Man
Walt Flanagan
Wooden Cap Smoker/
Egg Man/Offended
Customer/Cat
Admiring Bitter
Customer/
Angry Mourner
Ed Hapstak
Sanford
Lee Bendick
#812 Wynarski
David Klein
Hunting Cap Smoking
Boy/Low IQ Video
Customer/Hub Cap
Searching Customer/
Angry Mourner
Patttjean Csik
Coroner
Ken Clark
Administer of Fine
Donna Jeanne
Indecisive Video
Customer
Virginia Smith
Caged Animal
Masturbator
Betsy Broussard
Dental School Video
Customer
Ernest O'Donnell
Trainer
Kimberly Loughran
Alyssa's Sister Heather
Gary Stern
Tabloid Reading
Customer
Joe Bagnole
Cat Shit Watching
Customer
John Henry Westhead
Olaf the Russian
Metalhead
Chuck Dinkel
Stock in Chips Can
Leslie Hope
Jay's Lady Friend
Connie O'Connor
"Happy Scrappy" Mom
Vincent Pereira
Hockey Goalie/
Engagement Savvy
Customer
Ashley Pereira
"Happy Scrappy" Kid
Erix Infante
Bed Wetting Dad/
Cold Coffee Lover
Melissa Crawford
Video Confessor/Candy
Confession Customer
Thomas Burke
Blue Collar Man
Dan Hapstak
Door Tugging
Customer
Mitch Cohen
Leaning Against Wall
Matthew Banta
Burner Looking
For Wood
Rajiv Thapar
Cut-off Customer
Ken Clark
Orderly
Mike Belicose
Customer with Diapers
Jane Kuritz
Customer with Vaseline
and Rubber Gloves
Grace Smith
Milk Maid
Frances Cresci
Little Smoking Girl
Melissa Crawford
Matt Crawford
Sarla Thapar
Leslie Hope
Mitch Cohen
David Klein
Angry Crowd at Door

Brian Drinkwater
Bob Fister
Derek Jacodine
Hockey Players
Matthew Pereira
Frank Pereira
Carl Roth
Paul Finn
Angry Smoking Crowd

Haku
Dog
Lenin's Tomb
Cat

8,253 feet
92 minutes

Dolby stereo
Black and white

● Dante works at his local convenience store. On his day off, his boss calls him and asks if he will do an extra shift. Dante reluctantly agrees, foregoing a lie-in as well as hockey practice. Veronica, his girlfriend, comes by and reveals in conversation that she has performed fellatio on 37 guys in the past. A horrified Dante discusses the matter with Randal, his best friend who works at the adjacent video store and is further upset by Randal's news that Dante's high-school sweetheart, Caitlin, is getting married.

Veronica returns and Randal teases her. Dante finds out that his boss has gone to Vermont and that he will have to miss his hockey game. Furious about this, Dante rearranges the match so that it takes place on the store's roof, although the game is abandoned when the ball disappears down the drain. Back at the store, an old man asks to use the bathroom, then he asks if he can borrow a porn mag. Dante and Randal hear that one of their old school friends has died. They go to the wake but leave quickly, Randal having knocked the casket over.

A fitness trainer turns up at the store. Dante learns that he used to go out with Caitlin at the same time as she was dating him. Later a trading inspector fines Dante for selling cigarettes to minors. Dante begins to feel persecuted. Things come to head when Caitlin turns up. She announces that she has broken off her engagement and wants to go out with him again.

She goes to the bathroom and returns to compliment Dante on his sexual performance in the dark. He doesn't understand. It transpires that she has just had sex with the corpse of the old man who went to the bathroom. Caitlin goes into shock and is taken off to hospital. Dante is appalled. He is also berated for not caring enough about Veronica. Meanwhile Randal has told Veronica about Caitlin which naturally upsets her. When Randal returns to the store, Dante picks a fight with him. Later they patch up their friendship as they set about closing the store.

● As the put-upon Dante's day spirals increasingly out of control, there is pathos in his exasperation: "The real tragedy is that I'm not even meant to be here today." *Clerks* would seem to be the slacker's existentialist crisis movie. It's not that *nothing* happens; it's more that *everything* that does, however trivial, sets his life off-kilter. Yet there's a sense that there will always be an overnight stock check and that everything will be put back in place the following day to be disrupted once again by the assortment of odd-

ball customers, with their bizarre habits and dumb questions acting as counterpoint to the fanciful digressions of the two clerks concerned. In this respect *Clerks* is a circumspect comedy about the mundane and profane, with Dante and Randal as stooges waiting for their daily punchline. (Here the incident involving Caitlin and the old guy in the bathroom is the gross-out comic climax).

The film is structured into 18 episodes with debut writer/director Kevin Smith granting Dante a jokey poetics through segments entitled "Vilification", "Syntax", "Vagary", "Malaise", "Harbinger", "Perspicacity", "Paradigm", "Whimsy", "Lamentation", "Juxtaposition" and "Catharsis". This is tragi-comedy New Jersey style. At the age of 23, Kevin Smith has made an auspicious start to his career. With the film made for around \$27,000, he and his producer Scott Mosier demonstrate the kind of ingenuity that would make Roger Corman beam. Moonlighting at the Leonardo QuickStop store where Smith was working as a check-out clerk, the crew shot the film at night over a three week period. Thus the reason why the window shutters are down must be quickly established (they are jammed), and it becomes a running joke throughout the film.

Following the maxim "the budget is the aesthetic", whatever might have been wanting in the film is made up for in the script and the performances. The young cast have a gift with timing that is essential to the film's comic patois, with Brian O'Halloran perfecting a suitably wearied glare as the put-upon Dante ably matched by the deadpan iconoclastics of Jeff Anderson's Randal. As talk is cheap, it comes lean and fast here, all the time on the edge of absurdity. Smith is very much in the new generation of talk-heavy film-makers that includes Quentin Tarantino, Whit Stillman and Richard Linklater. His script is packed with observational but inconsequential set-piece riffs on such subjects as fellatio, friendship, semen snowballs and semantics. There is also the obligatory pop culture spiel – a debate on the ending of *Return of the Jedi* which segues into a discussion on home improvements and the moral universe of a roofing contractor.

The re-occurring preoccupations, however, are with people's basic habits from defecating to sex to smoking to those strange customers who insist on checking eggs to find the perfect dozen (allowing for the great riposte – "its not like you laid the eggs yourself"). If there is a binding concern to this film, then it is the peculiar predilections of those living in or passing through a small patch of New Jersey. This grass-roots catalogue of the weird and wondrous is contrasted with the more obvious oddities that make wacky headlines in *The National Inquirer* and which are commented upon in the film. The antics of Dante's customers and friends are rendered as fascinating, funny and compelling as anything in the newspaper this side of Elvis on the moon.

Lizzie Francke

Le Colonel Chabert

France 1994

Director: Yves Angelo

Certificate
PG

Distributor
Guild

Production Company
Film par film

In association with:
D.D. Films

TF1 Films production

Orly Films

Executive Producer
Bernard Marescot

Producer
Jean-Louis Livi

Production Manager
Patrick Bordier

Unit Production Managers
Marc Vade

Pascal Richez

Location Managers
Jean Ciria

Alexandre Putman

Assistant Directors
Frédéric Blum

Philippe Chapus

Casting
Alberte Garo

Screenplay
Jean Cosmos

Yves Angelo

Based on the novel by
Honore de Balzac

Adaptations
Jean Cosmos

Yves Angelo

Dialogue
Jean Cosmos

Script Supervisor
Véronique Legrance

Director of Photography
Bernard Lutic

Editor
Thierry Derocles

Set Design
Bernard Vezat

Costume Design
Franca Squarciarino

Make-up
Thi-Loan Nguyen

Hairstylist
Agathe Moro

Music performed by
Violin:

Régis Pasquier

Violoncelle:

Luis Claret

Piano:

Philippe Cassard

Clavecin:

Pierre Hantai

Music Extracts
"Trio avec piano in D,

Op. 70 No. 1 en ré

majeur", "Largo assai

ed espresso" by

Ludwig van Beethoven;

"Trio 'Les Quilles'

K 498, transcrit pour

violin, violoncello

et piano", "Rondeau

allegretto" by Wolfgang

Amadeus Mozart;

"Sonate K322" by

Domenico Scarlatti;

"Sonate pour piano

en la mineur D 959

andante" by Franz

Schubert; "Etudes

symphoniques Op. 13,

9ème variation"

"Davidsbündlertänze

Op. 6, Variation Wie

aus der Ferne" by

Robert Schumann;

"Marche Napoléon-

ienne et fanfares",

"Musique de la garde

républicaine" by

François Rauber

Sound
Pierre Gamet

Sound Mixers
Gérard Lamps

Eric Tisserand

Sound Effects
Jérôme Lévy

Cast
Gérard Depardieu

Chabert

Fanny Ardant

Countess Ferraud

Fabrice Luchini

Derville

André Dussollier

Count Ferraud

Daniel Prevost

Boucard

Olivier Saladin

Huré

Maxime Leroux

Godeschal

Eric Elmosnino

Desroches

Guillaume Romain

Simonnin

Patrick Bordier

Boutin

Claude Rich

Chamblin

Jean Cosmos

Costaz

Jacky Nercessian

Delbacq

Albert Delpey

Notary

Marc Maidenberg

Servant

Romane Bohringer

Sophie

Valérie Bettencourt

Julie

Florence Guerly

Client

Julie Depardieu

Maid

Isabelle Wolfe

Nun

9,989 feet

111 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Subtitles

Paris 1817, two years after the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy. A shabby-looking individual attempts to see the lawyer Derville in his chambers; returning at one in the morning (the only time Derville is free), he explains that he is Colonel Chabert, a much-decorated Napoleonic soldier believed killed at the battle of Eylau ten years before. In fact he had remained alive beneath a pile of corpses. He has spent the intervening years penuriously making his way back to Paris and trying to establish his identity; it is for this purpose, and to return to his wife



Demob happy: Gérard Depardieu

(now Countess Ferraud), that he enlists Derville's help.

Count Ferraud, meanwhile, is being advised by his friends at a worldly *soirée* that his ambition to become a peer will not be fulfilled unless he abandons his wife, who is compromised by her former life as a prostitute and by the fact that her fortune (once Chabert's) is of Napoleonic origin. Derville's clerk uncovers evidence which suggests that Chabert is telling the truth. Although committed to defending Countess Ferraud's interests, Derville takes pity on Chabert when he sees the appallingly squalid surroundings in which he is forced to live. He tries to resolve his compromised position by bringing Chabert and his 'ex-wife' together, initially keeping them out of sight of each other while he reads out the document he has drawn up. After a fraught confrontation he takes Chabert off to the Countess' country estate, where he progressively browbeats him into accepting an iniquitous financial settlement. When Chabert discovers that he will be required to disavow his newly re-established identity, he refuses even this.

In a coda, Count Ferraud has taken his friend's advice and abandoned the Countess for a match that is about to bring him the coveted peerage. Chabert is eking out his days in a hospice run by nuns, rejecting the name he has striven so hard to regain and electing henceforth to be known only by first name and number.

Given the expatriation of Luc Besson and (putatively) Léos Carax, and the restricted availability of films by what is left of the *nouvelle vague*, the heritage film genre inaugurated by Claude Berri's *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources* seems now to dominate the British view of French cinema to a degree that would have been unthinkable a decade ago. Yves Angelo's directorial debut (he was the cinematographer on Alain Corneau's *Tous les matins du monde* and Claude Sautet's *Un Coeur en hiver*) takes its place on a British distribution conveyor belt behind Patrice Chéreau's *La Reine Margot* and just ahead of Bertrand Tavernier's *La Fille de D'Artagnan*, to open in the summer.

Le Colonel Chabert exemplifies this genre in a number of ways, most obviously through lavish production values. Angelo expressly set out to "pay much attention to the physical trappings of wealth." Those of poverty and desolation are also expansively evoked

in the harrowing montage of the aftermath of battle with which the film opens and in the odorous city farm where Chabert lives. Two other heritage hallmarks are also present and correct: a literary source (here canonical as with Berri's *Germinal* rather than popular as with the Pagnol and Dumas adaptations) and perhaps most importantly what might be called a permutational use of performance. films are increasingly sold in France on the basis of their combination of stars, the most striking recent example being Huppert and Auteuil together for the first time in Christian Vincent's *La Séparation*. The recipe of *Le Colonel Chabert* is a predictable one: take France's megastar of megastars, juxtapose him with old friends rediscovered (Fanny Ardant from François Truffaut's *La Femme d'à côté*, Fabrice Luchini from Berri's *Uranus*) or new sparring partners (André Dussollier), and throw in an up-and-coming name cast against type (Romane Bohringer as the calmest and most compliant of ladies' maids).

The problem with this approach is that it can lead, as in *Le Colonel Chabert*, to a lazy, flabby form of intertextuality, clumsily underscored by visual or verbal reference. Sometimes this works, as with Derville's clear identification with the young Balzac – suggested in the novella by his monstrous appetite for toil and society, reinforced in the film by Luchini's appearance. Sometimes, however, it acts as a needlessly sharp elbow in the ribs, as when Derville proclaims that if Chabert is an impostor, "I shall have seen the most skilful actor of our time" (Depardieu – geddit?). Luchini and Depardieu deliver performances of high calibre, but little is asked of Ardant or Bohringer other than to look good in period costume. The sub-plot leading up to Ferraud's eventual desertion of the Countess is an addition to the novella, presumably by way of a history lesson, as is much of the dialogue. This need not have mattered, but Chabert's twice-uttered allusion to the colours of death as "first red, then blue" adds an incongruously poetico-philosophical element to the character.

Le Colonel Chabert may make one of Balzac's greatest and most neglected texts more widely known (it is still not available in paperback translation in this country) but it scarcely goes beyond what one would expect of a decent television serialisation. The catch-all range of music used – including the slow movement from Schubert's Piano Sonata in A, used to shattering effect in Robert Bresson's *Au Hasard Balthazar* – suggests an eagerness to market a CD package more than anything else. Before becoming an actor, Fabrice Luchini was a student in Roland Barthes' graduate seminar in Paris – the seminar that in its earlier days brought forth, in S/Z, a re-reading that revolutionised the study of Balzac. It is fittingly ironic then that his performance should be the best thing about this otherwise predictable and uninspiring film.

Keith Reader

Ed Wood

USA 1994

Director: Tim Burton

Certificate

15

Distributor

Buena Vista

Production Company

Touchstone Pictures

Executive Producer

Michael Lehmann

Producer

Denise Di Novi

Tim Burton

Co-producer

Michael Flynn

Production Co-ordinator

Susan P. McCarthy

Unit Production Manager

Michael Polaire

Location Managers

Elizabeth Matthews

Diana Leigh Myers

Assistant Directors

Michael Topoozian

Gregory Kent Simmons

Michael McCue

Casting

Victoria Thomas

Screenplay

Scott Alexander

Larry Karaszewski

Based on the book

Nightmare of Ecstasy

by Rudolph Grey

Script Supervisor

Janna Stern

Director of Photography

Stefan Czapsky

Visual Effects Photography

Alan Blaisdale

Motion Control Photography

Boyington Film

Productions

Camera Operators

Phil Carr-Foster

Mark Streapy

Special Visual Effects

Boyington Film

Productions

Supervisor:

Paul Boyington

Opticals

Reel Effects

Editor

Chris Lebenzon

Production Designer

Tom Duffield

Visual Consultant

Richard Hoover

Art Director

Okowita

Set Design

Chris Nushawg

Bruce Hill

Set Decorator

Cricket Rowland

Set Dresser

Erik Polczwartek

Illustrator

James Carson

Model Production Design

Jerry Pojawa

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Howard Jensen

Special Effects

J. Kevin Pike

Octopus:

Sota Effects

Costume Design

Colleen Atwood

Costume Supervisors

Nancy McArdle

Kenn Smiley

Make-up

Ve Neill

Carry Angland

Bela Lugosi Make-up

Rick Baker

Crew:

Matt Rose

Jim Leonard

Jim McLoughlin

Hairstylists

Yolanda Toussieng

Lucia Mace

Bridget Cook

Title Design

Robert Dawson

Paul Boyington

Titles

Cinema Research

Corporation

Music

Howard Shore

Music Performed by

The London

Philharmonic

Orchestra

Theremin Solos:

Lidia Kavina

Ondes Martenot Solos:

Cynthia Millar

Latin Keyboards:

Andy Narell

Orchestrations

Howard Shore

Music Editor

Ellen Segal

Songs/Music Extracts

"Bunny Hop" by Ray

Anthony, Leonard

Auletti, performed by

John Keating; "Kuba

Mambo" by and

performed by Perez

Prado; "Nautch Dance"

by and performed by

Korla Pandit; "Seringa"

by John Arkell; "Spring

Fashion", "Sweet and

Lovely" by Alan Braden;

"Que Sera Sera (What-

ever Will Be, Will Be)"

by Jay Livingston,

Ray Evans; "Grip of

the Law" by Trevor

Duncan; "Desolate

Village" by Bruce

Campbell; "Lasst uns

erfreuen (All Creatures

of God and King)"

by William Draper

Supervising Sound Editor

John Nutt

Dialogue Editors

Joan E. Chapman

Patrick Dodd

Scott Levitin

Production Sound

Edward Tise

Sound Recordist

John Kurlander

Music Mixers

Keith Grant

John Kurlander

ADR Mixers

Jeff Courtie

Brian Ruberg

Paul Zydell

Sound Re-recording Mixers

David Parker

Michael Semanick

Richard Schirmer

Sound Effects Editors

Ernie Fosselius

Sam Hinkley

Foley Artists

Margie O'Malley

Jerry Pojawa

Stunt Co-ordinator

John Branagan

Film Extracts

Plan Nine from Outer

Space (1956)

Cast

Johnny Depp

Ed Wood

Martin Landau

Bela Lugosi

Sarah Jessica Parker

Dolores Fuller

Patricia Arquette

Kathy O'Hara

Jeffrey Jones

Criswell

G. D. Spradlin

Reverend Lemon

Vincent D'Onofrio

Orson Welles

Bill Murray

Bunny Breckinridge

Mike Starr

George Weiss

Max Casella

Paul Marco

Brent Hinkley
Conrad Brooks
Lisa Marie
Vampira
George "The Animal" Steele
Tor Johnson
Juliet Landau
Loretta King
Clive Rosengren
Ed Reynolds
Norman Alden
Cameraman Bill
Leonard Termo
Makeup Man Harry
Ned Bellamy
Dr Tom Mason
Danny Dayton
Soundman
John Ross
Camera Assistant
Bill Cusack
Tony McCoy
Aaron Nelms
Teenage Kid
Biff Yeager
Rude Boss
Joseph R. Gannascio
Security Guard
Carmen Filpi
Old Crusty Man
Lisa Malkiewicz
Melora Walters
Secretaries
Conrad Brooks
Bartender
Don Amendolia
Salesman
Tommy Bertelsen
Tough Boy
Reid Cruickshanks
Stage Guard
Stanley Desantis
Mr Feldman
Lionel Decker
Edmund L. Shaff
Executives
Gene LeBell
Ring Announcer
Jesse Hernandez
Wrestling Opponent
Bobby Stayton
TV Show Host
Gretchen Becker
TV Host's Assistant
John Rice
Conservative Man
Catherine Butterfield
Conservative Wife
Mary Portser
Backer's Wife
King Cotton
Hick Backer
Don Hood
Southern Backer
Frank Echols
Dooman
Matthew Barry
Valet
Ralph Monaco
Waiter
Anthony Russell
Busboy
Tommy Bush
Stage Manager
Gregory Walcott
Potential Backer

Charles C. Stevenson Jr
Another Backer
Rance Howard
Old Man McCoy
Vasek C. Simek
Professor Strowski
Alan Martin
Vampira's Assistant
Salwa Ali
Vampira's Girlfriend
Rodney Kizziah
Vampira's Friend
Korla Pandit
Indian Musician
Hannah Eckstein
Greta Johnson
Luc De Schepper
Karl Johnson
Viny Argiro
TV Horror Show
Director
Patti Tippo
Nurse
Ray Baker
Doctor
Louis Lombardi
Rental House Manager
James Reid Boyce
Theatre Manager
Ben Ryan Ganger
Angry Kid
Ryan Holihan
Frantic Usher
Marc Revivo
High School Punk
Charlie Holliday
Tourist
Adam Drescher
Ric Mancini
Photographers
Daniel Riordan
Pilot/Strapping Young
Man
Mickey Cottrell
Hammy Alien
Christopher George
Simpson
Organist
Robert Binford
Herbert Boche
Linda Rae Brienza
Marlene Cook
Sylvia Coussa
Audrey Cuyler
Joseph Gollightly
Carrie Starner Hummel
Ramona Kemp-Blair
Carolyn Kessinger
Nancy Longyear
Matthew Nelson
Robert Huffer
William Michael Short
Susan Eileen Simpson
George F. Sterne
Charles Alan Stephenson
Cheri A. Williams
Cynthia Ann Wilson
Choir Members

11,404 feet
127 minutes

Dolby stereo
Black and white
Prints by
Technicolor



Re-hab reputations: Martin Landau, Johnny Depp

appears to offer to invest \$60,000. It turns out that Loretta only has \$300, forcing Ed to raise the money from a meat packer who insists his son is cast as the hero. When the retitled *Bride of the Monster* opens, Dolores walks out. Ed persuades Bela to admit himself to hospital to be treated for morphine addiction. There he meets Kathy O'Hara, who falls in love with him though he admits to his transvestism. Bela leaves hospital and Ed shoots footage with him for a future movie, but the actor dies.

Ed's landlord mentions that his Baptist Church wants to finance religious films. Ed persuades them to invest in his science fiction script *Grave Robbers from Outer Space*, which is built around the Bela footage. Ed has his whole cast (including flamboyant homosexual Bunny Breckinridge, bogus prophet Criswell and unemployed horror hostess Vampira) baptised, and casts Kathy's chiropodist Tom Mason as Bela's double. During filming, the Baptists insist the title be changed to *Plan 9 from Outer Space*. Pressure forces Ed to flee the set to a bar where he runs into his idol Orson Welles, similarly despondent at career reversals, and is inspired to finish the film he is confident he will be remembered for.

The bravura credits sequence of *Ed Wood* perfectly evokes the look and sound of *Plan 9 from Outer Space*, complete with cast names on tombstones and a cheesy black and white mock-up model of a rainswept Hollywood. It follows a mock intro by Jeffrey Jones cum Criswell in the first of the films many uncanny impersonations/interpretations of bizarre real-life characters. But a secondary layer of reference is touched on as the camera swoops over the model, evoking memories not only of the real Ed Wood's

fondly-remembered but mainly boring pictures but also of the similar opening of Tim Burton's *Beetlejuice*. Though nurtured as a project by executive producer Michael Lehmann, and based on a strange, anecdotal biography *Nightmare of Ecstasy: The Life and Art of Edward D. Wood Jr* by Rudolph Grey), *Ed Wood* has been thoroughly infiltrated by the Life and Art of its own director.

Continual evocation of Burton's previous films intermingles with the recreation of *Glen or Glenda* and *Bride of the Monster*: the central thread of Ed's relationship with Bela Lugosi is a clear echo of Burton's own well-documented (in Vincent) relationship with Vincent Price. The presence of Johnny Depp, like the tract house exterior and gothic cluttered interior of Lugosi's last home, evokes *Edward Scissorhands* while Ed's hyperactive, monomania and peculiar high voice echo the first of Burton's feature length alter-egos Pee-Wee Herman. Burton shares with Wood a lack of interest in conventional Hollywood notions of construction and character, compensating for the waywardness of his films with a bizarre, unreplicable flavour. It is ironic that for all its anecdotal and elliptical approach, *Ed Wood* is Burton's most successful piece of proper storytelling, its visuals never overwhelming its emotions, its consistent strangeness never interrupted by the second unit action stuff that flaws the Batman movies.

Given the Grey book as source material, the technical veracity of *Ed Wood* is often in doubt: Loretta King and Dolores Fuller give diametrically opposed accounts of how one came to replace the other in the lead role of *Bride of the Monster*, prompting screenwriters Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski to pick the interpretation that offers the most humour and the

strangest side detail (Loretta's no liquids diet). Much is omitted that would contradict the film's takes on Wood and Lugosi, including unmentioned marriages for each of them and important professional contacts (Wood's with producer Alex Gordon and Lugosi's late role in *The Black Sleep*). Wood's meeting with Welles is an inspired fiction given life by an uncanny Vincent D'Onofrio performance. His self-involved Welles is just as much a movie-struck outsider as Ed, fitting in perfectly with the film's other eccentrics by holding a casual conversation without once questioning why Ed is dressed in women's clothing.

Although the film does not resist the temptation to score easy laughs from Ed's eccentricities and the shortcomings of his films ("Perfect", he snaps after every botched take, "print it"), Burton and his collaborators invest them with a skewed dignity that is ultimately very moving. There is a touch of contemporary irony in Lugosi's proud claim "I'm the first celebrity that ever checked into rehab" but the film is as smitten as Ed with the old ham.

Marvellously incarnated by a crusty Martin Landau (himself a talented veteran of too many dreadful horror programmers) Lugosi sadly admits in his first scene that "Nobody gives two fcs for Bela" and goes from wistfully explaining his hypnotic finger waving with "You have to be double-jointed and you have to be Hungarian" to fulminating against an old rival by claiming "Karloff doesn't deserve to smell my shit". The cast is perfect down to the walk-ons; from Bill Murray's Bunny Breckinridge, who returns from a failed sex change in Mexico with whole mariachi band in tow, alleging "Without these men, I would be dead", to Lisa Marie's Vampira, resisting induction into Wood's circle but finally swamped by her own invented Morticia Addams character.

Tim Burton remains a reticent director, unwilling to show his hand even as he continues obsessively to experiment with autobiography. This is reflected in a strange void at the centre of the film, as he refuses to examine the sources of Wood's insane, naïve, ruthless drive or his off-centre integrity (in its own cracked way, *Glen or Glenda* is an art movie) or even his transvestism. All the emotional highs of the film come from Ed's devotion to his associates (when told he's "the only guy in town who doesn't pass judgement", he says "If I could, I wouldn't have any friends") or from their unexplained devotion to him (Bela envies Ed the love of Kathy, saying none of his wives would ever have jumped onto a moving car for him).

When Kathy, played with sweetly subtle seriousness by Patricia Arquette, presses Ed about his past, he talks not about himself but his love for pulp magazines and radio serials. Like Kathy, we are charmed, entertained and introduced to unforgettable people, but left no wiser about the Lives and Art of either Ed Wood or Tim Burton.

Kim Newman

Exotica

Canada 1994

Director: Atom Egoyan

Certificate

18

Distributor

Artificial Eye

Production Companies

Alliance
Communication
Corporation presents
An Ego Film Production
With the participation
of Telefilm Canada
Ontario Film
Development
Corporation

Producers

Atom Egoyan

Camelia Frieberg

Associate Producer

David Webb

Production Co-ordinator

Roland W. Schlimme

Production Manager

Sandra Cunningham

Location Manager

Victoria Harding

Assistant Directors

David Webb

Fergus Barnes

Michele Radich

Screenplay

Atom Egoyan

Script Supervisor

Joanne Harwood

Director of Photography

Paul Sarossy

2nd Unit Director

of Photography

Mark Willis

Steadicam Operator

David Crone

Editor

Susan Shipton

Production Designers

Linda del Rosario

Richard Paris

Set Dressers

Doug McCullough

Brent Kelly

Linda del Rosario

Richard Paris

Garth Brunt

Scenic Artists

Steven Willets

Bill Koon

Special Effects Supervisor

Michael Kavonagh

Costume Design

Linda Muir

Make-up

Nicole Demers

Tattoo Artist

Alison Ethier

Hairstylist

Debra Johnson

Title Design

Greg van Alstyne

Titles/Opticals

Film Opticals

of Canada

Music

Mychael Danna

Music Performed by

Shehnai:

Sambhaji

Clarinet:

Ameene Shishakly

Flute:

Ron Korb

Oud:

Nabil Saab

Tar:

Hovhanness Tarpinian

Darabukha:

Kamal Saab

Tambourine:

Adel Saab

Bass Guitar:

Paul Intson

Vocals:

Rakesh Kumar

Annie Szamosi

Garro Tchaliguan

Harrison Kennedy

Music Mixer

David Bottrill

Music Editor

Paul Shikata

Songs/Music Extracts

"Everybody Knows" by

Leonard Cohen, Sharon

Robinson, performed

by Leonard Cohen;

"Flame Of Desire",

"Real Love" by John

Grimaldi, performed

by Studebaker John and

The Hawks; "Fresh Has

Jus B'Gun", "Fresh Has

Jus B'Gun Remix" by

Courtney Cunningham,

Franz Malvoism, Kevin

Coley, Philip Cole,

performed by MVP;

"Ave Generosa", "Je

vous pri" A chantar"

performed by The

Toronto Consort;

"Impromptu, Op. 90,

no. 4" by Franz

Schubert, performed

by Eve Egoyan

Choreography

Claudia Moore

Sound Design

Steve Munro

Dialogue Editor

Sue Conolly

ADR Editor

Peter Winninger

Foley Recordist

Tony van den Akker

Sound Recordist

Ross Redfern

Re-recording Mixers

Daniel Pellerin

Peter Kelly

Keith Elliott

Foley Artist

Andy Malcolm

Stunt Co-ordinator

Ted Hanlon

Cast

Bruce Greenwood

Francis

Elias Koteas

Eric

Don McKellar

Thomas

Mia Kirshner

Christina

Arsinée Khanjian

Zoe

Sarah Polley

Tracey

David Hemblen

Inspector

Calvin Green

Customs Officer

Peter Krantz

Man in Taxi

Damon D'Oliveira

Billy Morasty

Men At Opera

Jack Blum

Scalper

Ken McDougall

Doorman

Victor Garber

Harold

9.332 feet

104 minutes

Dolby stereo

in colour

Thomas, a pet shop owner, is watched through a two-way mirror by airport customs officials. He shares a cab from the airport into town with a stranger who, alighting by an upmarket strip club called Exotica, gives him two ballet tickets instead of his share of the fare.

The club is presided over by Zoe, a pregnant madame, and Eric, a smooth-talking DJ who has fathered her baby in a contract agreement. Christina does an act in which she plays a Lolita-ish schoolgirl, watched jealously by Eric. Every night she dances privately for Francis, an auditor whose schoolgirl daughter and wife are dead. While he visits the club, his niece, Tracey, 'babysits' at his empty home.

Eric recalls his first meeting with Christina, when hunting for Francis' missing daughter. At the ballet, Thomas picks up a young male escort, but goes home alone to the macaw eggs he smuggled through customs. Francis comes to Thomas' shop to audit his accounts. Christina discovers Zoe's pregnancy contract with Eric and is furious. After many opera/ballet visits, Thomas, finally takes a male escort home - one of the customs officials. When he wakes up, the man has confiscated the eggs. In Exotica's men's room, an unseen Eric persuades Francis to touch Christina, but when he does so, Eric throws him out and has him barred. Having discovered Thomas' smuggling activities, Francis agrees not to go to the authorities if Thomas will go to Exotica and talk to Christina.

Christina tells Thomas that Francis never got over the murder of his teenage daughter and that his wife died in a car crash a few months afterwards. Eric tries to persuade Thomas to touch Christina, telling him that he used to be her lover. Zoe finds out what Eric is up to and sacks him. The next night, Thomas goes back to the club and talks to Christina again. Francis waits outside, determined to shoot Eric. Eric approaches and tells him that it was he who found his daughter's body. Francis embraces him. Inside the club, Thomas puts his hand on Christina's leg. She removes it slowly. In a flashback, we see a young Christina arriving at Francis' house to babysit his daughter. When Francis takes her home, she hints at how unhappy she is. He comforts her kindly.

Atom Egoyan returns on magnificent form to the themes he knows and loves: sex, love, relationships and the voyeuristic nature of all of these. Where his last film, *Calendar*, emphasised the most anal aspects of his obsessions, this sympathetic group piece is far more relaxed and much more enjoyable and intriguing for it. Almost every member of this group mythologises who and where they are through play acting and ritual. Zoe plays the part of dispassionate matriarch. Christina is crystallised into the schoolgirl she acts onstage. Francis turns his mourning for his dead daughter into a fetishistic, psychosexual relationship through Christina's striptease

character. Thomas, a pet shop owner, would rather see himself as a smuggler of exotic goods.

In keeping with the "look but don't touch" maxim of the club Exotica, the characters are all alienated by their personas: Eric and Zoe, both obsessed with Christina, content themselves with watching her through secret windows; Francis can only look at Christina dancing - even his memories of his wife and daughter are video images. And Thomas on his first, tentative trips to the opera can only sit next to the men he picks up, but cannot take them home. Egoyan skilfully weaves voyeurism deep into the film: there are mirrors everywhere, from the club's spyholes to Thomas' glass tanks to the two-way customs official's mirror. Voyeurism, the watchword of Egoyan's postmodern world, is a symbol of both aloneness and a strange kind of togetherness. The watchers collaborate in their spying, and are finally bound together not through love but through another's transgression (the murder of a child) in the past.

They turn out, in fact, to be members of a complicated, oedipally disrupted 'family' with Zoe, Eric and Francis all as symbolic parents/lovers to Christina. Family metaphors run even deeper: Zoe and Eric are about to parent a child; Eric and Christina meet while seeking a (dead) child. Even Thomas is nesting his macaw eggs. Egoyan's avowed desire for Exotica to unfold like a striptease, with every scene revealing just a little bit more, turns the audience, too, into tantalised voyeurs. Characters enter the film enigmatically, leading us to guess at their roles and identities, and to construct our own scenarios. (Who do we think Tracey is when we first see Francis take her home and hand her money? A child prostitute? A girlfriend?) But this is not just the director at his most brilliantly perverse, for Exotica's game-playing is also fleshed out with real human sympathy. Francis, for example, trapped in an incestuous fantasy, is also seen in another relationship as a kindly, rather philosophical uncle. The brooding, almost satanic Eric is recalled as a fresh-faced, more optimistic student, capable of selflessness.

The film's playful teasing is not confined to its characters. The various 'exotic' settings have the same effect, whether they be the club, where disco is replaced by Leonard Cohen as striptease music, Thomas' subterranean-inspired pet shop, or the colourful chaos of Harold's place ('exotic' birds loom large in all locations). It is only from the moment of Christina's explanation of Francis' past to Thomas, achieved with the flourish of a detective announcing his denouement, that Exotica starts to lose its ingenious, languorous way. The film then seems to redirect its energy towards tidying up loose ends. But perhaps this is only one more metaphor - mirroring the way in which the titillation of the striptease can be more exciting than its final, naked flourish.

Amanda Lipman

La frontera

Chile/Spain 1991

Director: Ricardo Larrain

Certificate

Not yet issued
Distributor
Metro Tartan
Production Company
Cine XXI
With the participation
of Television Española
S.A.

Ion Producciones
Filmocentro Cine
Television Nacional
de Chile

Executive Producers
Eduardo Larrain S.
Ricardo Larrain P.
Producers

Eduardo Larrain S.
Mara Sanchez
Alvaro Corvera
Sebastian Penna
Dolores Soler

Post-production
Pedro Figueroa
Assistant Director

Joaquin Astaburaga

Screenplay
Jorge Goldemberg
Ricardo Larrain

Script Supervisor
Andrea Perez
Director of Photography

Hector Rios

Underwater Photography

Rodrigo Fernandez

Henry Garcia

Camera Operator

Rene Rojo

Editor

Claudio Martinez

Art Director

Juan Carlos Castillo

Set Design

Alejandro Gonzales

Special Effects

Roberto Sancho

Costume Design

Montserrat Catala

Wardrobe Supervisor

Catalina Garcia

de la Huerta

Make-up

Margarita Marchi

Hairstylist

Veronica Ugalde

Music

Jaime de Aguirre

Sound

Miguel Hormazabal

Dubbing

Miguel Serrano

Sound Mixer

Eric Bonnard

Cast

Patricio Contreras

Ramiro Orellana

Gloria Laso

Maite

Hector Noguera

Father Patricio

Alonso Venegas

Delegate

Aldo Bernaldes

Diver

Patricio Bunster

Don Ignacio

Crisela Nuñez 'La Batacuna'

Hilda, the Machi

Sergio Schmied

Secretary

Anibel Reyna

Detective Robusto

Sergio Hernandez

Detective Delgado

Elsa Poblete

Elsa

Sergio Madrid

Gutierrez

Joaquin Velasco

Hernan

Eugenio Morales

Assistant Diver

Raquel Curilem

Bar Owner

Ismael Millas

Dancer

Jorge Arana

Journalist

Alfredo Silva

Camerman

Jose Miguel Aillapan

Mapuche Boy

Miriam Hernandez

Photographer

Carlos Huico

Santiago Mendoza

Hugo Montesinos

Lorenzo Aillapan

Patrons

TBC feet

TBC minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Subtitles



Salvaging the future: Patricio Contreras

who have returned from their own exile in Holland. Subsequently he embarks on a passionate affair with Maite, whose father urges Ramiro to take her away from the town. Unexpectedly granted his freedom, Ramiro cannot bring himself to leave. As Ramiro and Maite make love for the last time, the waters rise (as the healer predicted) and a wave crashes through the house, drowning the father. Maite opts to stay with the latter, cradling him in her lap, while Ramiro flees to the hills with the townspeople. A television news crew arrives by helicopter to cover the flood. When asked to speak on camera, Ramiro slowly and deliberately repeats the original denunciation of the disappearance of his colleague which had caused him to be sent into exile before the start of the film.

The Chilean premiere of this, Larrain's first full-length feature, was attended by the country's President and *La frontera* went on to be the most popular domestic film for 25 years. Celebrating the survival of a national cinema after the end of a bloody dictatorship and commemorating the victims of that dictatorship, so recent at the time of the film's production, *La frontera* combines history and allegory in an elliptical way which UK audiences may find elusive. Sometimes, the moral is explicit: Maite's father claims that, just as the Spanish Nationalists overwhelmed the Republicans in the Civil War, so the sea devastated the town in a tidal wave. Different responses to dictatorship are laid out before us: silent and ironic resistance from within (Ramiro); vocal denunciation from without (his wife); brutish and drunken indifference in the provinces (the townspeople). Elsewhere the unspeakable remains unspeakable – Maite remarks, simply and resonantly, that after losing Spain, the Republicans "lost again"; and the vicissitudes of military rule are more characteristically voiced in ironic or allegorical images – the sheep tethered to a log by the ferry;

the diver's dependence on a drunken assistant to pump the air he requires to remain alive. Moreover, the refusal to provide names for many of the characters (or indeed for the town itself) tends to abstract the action, cutting it adrift from any over-specific reference to a history all too familiar to a Chilean audience.

Allegory and history come together in the absurdities of bureaucracy, parodied in the figure of the Delegate who insists Ramiro print his name each time he signs in and obliges him to converse with his family from the shore while the latter are stranded mid-stream on the ferry. The frontier of the title thus has many meanings: historically, it refers to the border between colonists and indigenes, a site of bloody massacres, and perhaps to the border wars with Andean neighbours, equally formative of the modern Chilean state. Topographically, it refers to the line between land and sea, so vital to a maritime nation. Politically, it cites the fragile boundary between dictatorship and democracy, which may be breached with terrible consequences at any time. Here the vital metaphor is the drowned village, the image both of irreparable loss (Maite's child is dead, her abandoned home inhabited by cows) and of a possible political renovation (the diver retrieves a statue of the founders from the sea bed). Moreover, the often lyrical camerawork suggests a psychic component: there is a border zone between sanity and madness straddled uncomfortably by Maite's father, who is both the voice of historical memory of the conflict between left and right and the crazy escapist who "goes to Spain" in his waking dreams.

British viewers may find *La frontera* neither as politically explicit nor as lyrically exotic as they might hope for from a Latin American film. It stops short of simple denunciation and treats such potentially picturesque themes as indigenous medicine in a decidedly understated manner. Larrain has clearly found a third way of Chilean film-making between such exile antecedents as the committed Miguel Littin and the fantasist Raúl Ruiz. He can hardly be expected to conform to European stereotypes of Latin America, based on countries more flamboyant and culturally diverse than the grimly rainswept and monochrome Chile shown here.

But if the film's pace and dialogue sometimes flag, the patient viewer will be rewarded by the finely modulated performance of the stoic actor Patricio Contreras and the defiant Gloria Laso; and there is one extraordinary sequence of wordless solidarity when a depressed and drunken Ramiro is invited to join the male couples dancing a joyless jig in the squalid local inn. If *La frontera* is thus no revelation, it is an important testimony to a tragic national history and a work which cleverly avoids the twin perils which often beset film-makers in such circumstances: earnest documentation and imagistic fantasy.

Paul Julian Smith

i.d.

United Kingdom/Germany 1994

Director: Philip Davis

Certificate

18

Distributor

PolyGram Filmed

Entertainment

Production Companies

BBC Films

The Sales Company

Present a Parallax

Picture

In association with

Metropolis

Filmproduktion

With the participation

of The Hamburg

Film Fund

The European

Co-production Fund

PolyGram

Executive Producer

Mark Shivas

Producer

Sally Hibbin

Co-producers

Christina Kallas

Luciano Gloor

Production Co-ordinators

Karin Padgham

Wendy Lilly

Production Manager

Lesley Stewart

Hamburg Unit Production

Manager

Peter Stockhaus

Location Manager

Robert How

Hamburg:

Robert Rockstroh

Spain:

Rosa Romero

Post-production

Co-ordinators

Tessa Wolpe

Carrie Comerford

Assistant Directors

Guy Travers

Peter Freeman

Bill Thompson

Hamburg:

Margit Czenki

Screenplay

Vincent O'Connell

Story

James Bannon

Script Supervisor

Annie Simpson

Director of Photography

Thomas Mauch

2nd Unit Photography

Klaus Krieger

Peter Chappell

Editor

Inge Behrens

Production Designer

Max Gottlieb

Art Director

Matthias Koch

Chris Roope

Costume Design

Mike O'Neill

Make-up/Hair

Chris Blundell

Music

Will Gregory

Dubbing Editor

Kevin Brazier

Dubbing Mixer

Stephan Konken

Sound Recordist

Alistair Crocker

Spain:

Daniel Fontrodona

Stunt Co-ordinators

Andy Bradford

Roy Alon

Cast

Reece Dinsdale

John

Richard Graham

Trevor

Perry Fenwick

Eddie

Philip Glenister

Charlie

Warren Clarke

Bob

Claire Skinner

Marie

Saskia Reeves

Lynda

Sean Pertwee

Martin

Charles De'ath

Nik

Lee Ross

Gumbo

Terry Cole

Puff

Steve Sweeney

Viny

Nicholas Bailey

Micky

Nick Bartlett

David Daley

David Schaal

Paul Funnell

Alan Cooke

Mynton Mbula

Peter Blythe

DC Evans

Ian Redford

DI Schofield

Mark Burdis

Jamie Foreman

Previous Team

Graham Camball

Licensing Officer

Max Smith

Tyneburn Police

Philip Davis

Duty Sergeant

Frank Coda

Guisepp

Cindi O'Callaghan

Moir

Michèle Winstanley

Stef

Jacqueline Leonard

Ja

Eric Allan

Marie's Dad

Jean Warren

Marie's Mum

Michael Brogan

Jason Moody

Steve Toussaint

Shadwell Fans

Paul Brennan

Thomas Craig

Tyneburn Leaders

Guy Matthewman

Barman

Nick Bolton

Brief

Shirley King

Lady on Bus

Peter Joyce

Neighbour

9,660 feet

107 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

London, the late 80s. John, an ambitious police officer, is ordered, along with three colleagues, to infiltrate a gang of football hooligans at Shadwell Town. They decide to gain access to the top thugs who use the Rock pub as their unofficial HQ. Posing as painters and decorators, John and his superior, Trevor, visit the

pub over a series of lunchtimes, befriending Lynda, the barmaid. When they make their first evening appearance, their familiarity with Lynda helps ease their way in, and they travel with the gang to an away match. Arrangements have been made for a fight en route with opposition fans. Trevor alerts local colleagues whose arrival pre-empt any violence. The Rock crowd suspects an inside informer. Martin, one of the gang leaders, fingers John and Trevor. John pretends to be outraged, inventing a story about his illiteracy which succeeds in killing any suspicion about him.

Increasingly drawn into the life of the gang, John is pleased when the undercover team is given its own operations base. At home, his adopted lifestyle affects his relationship with girlfriend Marie. During sex, he seriously manhandles her. He now prefers to be with the Rock crowd, and close to Lynda. While looking for trouble at a match, John is pounced upon and slashed across the face. He is led away by the local police. Back at the operations den, the others watch a video of his performance. Trevor worries that John has forgotten he is playing a role.

A foreign holiday with Marie ends in argument, and when John returns to London, he sleeps with Lynda. At an away match, he fatally wounds one of the opposing gang. The fight was recorded on a police video, and only Trevor's intervention saves John. Meanwhile, at the Rock, John's exploits have won the attention of a mysterious figure who seems to wield great power. But just as John has fulfilled his brief, his superiors decide to call off the operation. Another police division acts on some minor transgressions, closing down the Rock. Lynda, who knew all along that John was a policeman, sends him packing and Marie refuses to come back to him.

In a coda, Trevor comes across John in the streets, apparently marching with a group from the extreme right. He runs over to him, asking what he's up to. John replies that he's working.

i.d. offers some incidental pleasures, but it is not entirely convincing as "a psychological journey", which is how debutant feature director Philip Davis sees it. According to this

design, football hooliganism is not the theme but the backdrop against which we watch John's transformation. Although itching for promotion, John seems to be doing well at work. He appears to be well-liked and well-adjusted, and his home life is pretty settled. Asked to play a violent role, he takes a liking to it, forgets it's a role, and becomes the thug.

This schematic development is all too neat. A more radical project might have shown how extreme violence in one part of a life can co-exist with comfortable order. Here, everything is signposted, even down to John gaining a conspicuous pot-belly – a sure mark, we are invited to note, of a lout and a poor lover. Deciding against a De Niro-style bout of weight-gaining self-abuse on lager, Reece Dinsdale simply sticks his stomach out.

The pathological urge to don the clothes of authority has often been depicted on film (most recently explored in the brilliant *I Love a Man in Uniform*). In *i.d.* the reverse appears to happen. John moves into violence by slipping out of gear, although to join the gang is to put on another uniform, one which validates aggression – at least in the eyes of other hooligans. But why does this life lure John? Does he simply enjoy the adrenalin rush of the fight? There is a suggestion that he sees something raw, something 'honest' in football violence, which distinguishes it from the police's ordered enforcement. (He hates the bureaucratic manoeuvrings of his superiors.) This is a little romantic. Hooligans – as events around football grounds this year suggest – can be as organised as the most bureaucratically-minded policemen.

According to some of the more persuasive arguments of 'experts', those involved in football-related violence are looking for power denied them elsewhere. As an examination of the life of the hooligan, *i.d.* is a non-starter. The thugs hardly exist beyond match day and their preparations for rucks. What do they do elsewhere? Why are they hooligans? In this regard, *i.d.* compares unfavourably with *The Firm*, the Alan Clarke-directed Screen Two from 1989, which dealt with the subject in the round. The film-makers' get-out is that the hooliganism serves as a backdrop to John's story. But it's difficult to pull off a plausible portrait of an individual if the world in which he moves lacks credibility.

So what of the incidental pleasures? Writer Vincent O'Connell scripted *Criminal*, an impressive Screen Two for the BBC last year, and there are nice touches here. He is particularly good at exploring that area where macho bravado meets cloying sentimentality, where hard cases, overcome by drink or emotion, indulge in the cheap lexicon of greetings cards. Also, Philip Davis elicits some decent ensemble playing and handles the busy scenes in and around the football grounds reasonably well. All in all, as one of the game's commentators might have it, it's a promising defeat.

Robert Yates

Just Cause

USA 1995

Director: Arne Glimcher

Certificate

18

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

A Lee Rich production
In association with
Fountainbridge Films

Executive Producer

Sean Connery

Producers

Lee Rich

Arne Glimcher

Steve Perry

Co-producers

Gary Foster

Anna Reinhardt

Associate Producers

Rhonda Tollefson

Michael Alden

Production Associate

Lester Ayala

Production Supervisor

Spencer Franklin

Production Co-ordinator

Pam Dworsky

Unit Production Manager

Steve Perry

Location Managers

Bill Bowling

Elizabeth Elwell

Beverly Visitation

Mary Morgan

Post-production

Co-ordinator

Fela Small

2nd Unit Director

Steve Perry

Assistant Directors

Tom Reilly

Richard Patrick

Gary Sales

Casting

Billy Hopkins

Suzanne Smith

Kerry Barden

Screenplay

Jeb Stuart

Peter Stone

Based on the novel

by John Katzenbach

Script Supervisors

Wilma Garscadden-

Gahret

2nd Unit:

Jeanne Byrd

Director of Photography

Lajos Koltai

2nd Unit Director

of Photography

Alexander Witt

Wildlife Photography

Alan Degan

Aerial Photography

Frank Holgate

Camera Operators

Ray de la Motte

Gregory Lundsgaard

2nd Unit:

Mike McGowan

Bill Smalling

Steadicam Operator

Gregory Lundsgaard

Opticals

The Effects House

Editor

William Anderson

Film:

Armen Minasian

Production Designer

Patrizia von Brandstein

Art Director

Dennis Bradford

Set Design

Mark Garner

Set Decorators

Cloudia

Maria Nay

Set Dresser

Peter Muller

Scenic Artist

John Snow

Storyboard Artist

Brick Mason

Mural Artist

Pablo Miranda

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Mike Meinardus

Special Effects

Robert Henderson

Joe Pancake

Costume Design

Ann Roth

Gary Jones

Costume Supervisor

Cheryl Beasley

Blackwell

Make-up

Scott Eddo

Shelly Woodhouse

Melanie Hughes

Hairstylists

Paul Abascan

Donna Greene

Title Design

Balsmeyer & Everett

Music

James Newton Howard

Music Conductor

Artie Kane

Orchestrations

James Newton Howard

Brad Dechter

Chris Boardman

Jeff Atmajian

Music Editor

Thomas Drescher

Songs

"No solo a ti" by Robert

Skiles, "Beto's Fifth"

performed by Beto

and the Fairlanes;

"I Only Have Eyes For

You" by Al Dubin,

Harry Warren,

performed by André

Previn, Joe Pass, Ray

Brown; "Crying

in the Chapel" by

Artie Glenn, performed

by The Orioles;

"Guantanamera" by

José Martí, Pete Seeger,

Hector Angulo, Julian

Orbon, José Fernandez

Diaz; "Baby Your Love"

by Charisse Rose,

Cassandra Lucas,

Dwight Meyers,

performed by

Changing Faces;

"I Got it Bad and That

Ain't Good" by Duke

Ellington, Paul Francis

Webster, performed by

The Oscar Peterson Trio

Supervising Sound Editor

Michael Kirchberger

Sound Editors

Warren Shaw

Dialogue:

Daniel Korintus

Jeffrey Stern

Laura Civiello

Supervising ADR Editor

Jane McCulley

ADR Editor

Antonio Martinez

Foley Editor

Jac Rubenstein

Production Sound Mixer

James Sabat

Music Mixer

Shawn Murphy

ADR Mixer

David Boulton

Sound Re-recording Mixer

Lee Dichter

Sound Effects Editor

Paul Soucek

Wildlife Consultant

Gene McMillan

Stunt Co-ordinator

Chuck Picerni Jr

Weapon Specialist

Otniel Gonzalez

Animal Trainer

Bert Wahl

Fly Wrangler

Donovan Smith

Cast
Sean Connery
Paul Armstrong
Laurence Fishburne
Tanny Brown
Kate Capshaw
Laurie Armstrong
Blair Underwood
Bobby Earl
Ed Harris
Blair Sullivan
Christopher Murray
Wilcox
Ruby Dee
Evangeline
Scarlett Johansson
Kate
Daniel J. Travanti
Warden
Ned Beatty
McNair
Liz Torres
Ida Conklin
Lynne Thigpen
Delores
Tara Hicks
Lena
Victor Slezak
Sergeant Rogers
Kevin McCarthy
Phil Prentiss
Hope Lange
Libby Prentiss
Chris Sarandon
Lyle Morgan
George Plimpton
Elder Phillips
Brooke Alderson
Dr Doliveau
Colleen Fitzpatrick
Prosecutor
Richard Liberty
Chaplin
Joel S. Ehrenkranz
Judge
Barbara Jean Kane
Joanie Shriver

Maurice Jamaal Brown
Tanny's Son
Patrick Maycock
Jordan F. Vaughn
Kids Washing Car
Francisco Paz
Concierge
Marie Hyman
Clerk
S. Bruce Wilson
Party Guest
Erik Stephan
Student
Melanie Hughes
Receptionist
Megan Meinardus
Melissa Hood-Julien
Jenna Del Buono
Ashley Popelka
Marisa Perry
Ashley Council
Augusta Lundsgaard
Slumber Party Girls
Connie Lee Brown
Clarence Lark III
Prison Guards
Monte St James
Gary Landon Mills
Shareef Malik
Tony Bolano
Angelo Maldonado
Fausto Rodriguez
Prisoners
Karen Leeds
Dan Romero
Donn Lamkin
Stacie A. Zinn
Reporters

9.195 feet
102 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor
Anamorphic

Florida 1986. A white police Lieutenant, Wilcox, and his black assistant, Detective Tanny Brown, arrest Bobby Earl Ferguson, a young black man. In custody, Wilcox beats him and asks leading questions about a sex attack. Eight years on at a Harvard University symposium, law academic Paul Armstrong lectures on the disproportionate number of blacks who are executed for murder. A woman tells him her grandson, Bobby Earl, is on Death Row for a crime he didn't commit, Paul is reluctant to help but his wife Laury – like him a former DA – persuades him.

In Florida Paul reads up on the rape and murder of Joanie Shriver which Bobby Earl says Tanny Brown framed him for. Bobby Earl claims Tanny extracted the confession by forcing him to play Russian Roulette. Bobby Earl's dental records were never matched to the bite marks on the body and no semen traces were mentioned in the white female pathologist's report. Tanny drives Paul along the killer's route to the murder spot in the Everglades and almost strangles him with the seatbelt – supposedly to show that Joanie's screams would have been inaudible five minutes from town.

Tanny reveals that Bobby Earl had been charged with kidnap (and acquitted) in another state. Bobby Earl says his 'victim', a white girl, wanted to come out in his car. He claims her real killer is a serial killer, Blair Sullivan, held on the same Death Row. Tanny mentions that Laury was the prosecutor at Bobby Earl's kidnap trial – which Paul didn't know. Laury had plea- ▶



Triumph of the Bill: Reece Dinsdale

◀ bargained the case but it was thrown out. During an adjournment, Bobby was badly beaten in the cells; Laury's guilt made her persuade Paul to help him. Paul visits Sullivan, who claims not to remember if Joanie was one of his victims, but who tells Paul, in Biblical riddles, the location of the murder weapon. Tammy joins Paul in a hunt in the Everglades. Paul finds a knife – a scimitar consistent with Joanie's unusual wounds – hidden in a culvert.

Letters from Sullivan about "carving up" Joanie secure Bobby Earl's release on probation. Sullivan phones Paul: his death warrant has been signed, and he asks Paul to say goodbye to his family on his behalf. Paul arrives at the Sullivans' house to find dead, decaying bodies. Sullivan confesses that he never met Shriver. Tanny tells Paul the confession is useless if Sullivan isn't alive to testify, but Sullivan is electrocuted. Having slashed Wilcox's throat, Bobby Earl abducts Laury and Katie. Paul and Tanny lose their trail and head for the Everglades where, in a hut, they find Laury and Katie bound and gagged. Bobby Earl attacks Tanny and, entering the hut, announces that during his kidnap trial beating he was also castrated. Paul calls his bluff by claiming that Blair Sullivan has had a stay of execution. Tanny reappears alive; Bobby Earl is stabbed by Paul with his own knife, then devoured by a crocodile. In relief and shock, the reunited family stagger to Tanny's car.

● "This is a case that hangs together by the thinnest of threads," explains Laurence Fishburne's black Florida cop to Sean Connery's liberal white Harvard law academic. "Now, if you start pickin' at them threads, they collapse." The same could be said of this big, expensive legal thriller.

As an adrenalin-generator, *Just Cause* can't be argued with, and there are enough acerbic pleasures of script, acting and detail for it to convince – at first – that it's the classy, intelligent vehicle it thinks it is. The movie is mature enough, for instance, to include a marital relationship in which cynical mutual knowledge between partners is the sign of a bond rather than breakdown. When Laury tells Paul, after the revelation of her role in Bobby Earl's kidnap trial, that she wants him to "make it right" for Bobby Earl, he ripostes: "No honey – you want me to make it right for you."

Blair Underwood makes a persuasively clever, bitter Bobby Earl until the script starts making his job impossible. Then there's Connery: his arrival at Miami airport hemmed in by slack-wearing seniors – probably no older than he is – is a hoot. But take away the adrenalin rush and *Just Cause* starts looking incoherent, derivative and fundamentally hokey. What begins promisingly as a clever, Scott Turow-ish legal twister with a campaigning streak changes halfway through into a pale echo of *The Silence of the Lambs* before plundering *Cape Fear* to conjure a last-minute women-in-peril climax. In the

process, a complex black protagonist is sidelined in favour of a near-parodic white serial-killer narrative, with all the attendant clichés.

Possibly this shift in tone has been conceived to keep audiences amused; what it actually does is destroy the film's psychological credibility. When Paul enters Sullivan's cell, recent generic convention requires the brilliant lawyer to fall under the born-again nutter's hypnotic spell – a development not only at odds with Paul's shrewdness but also with Ed Harris's amusingly camp personification of Sullivan. The *übermensch* status of the formulaic movie serial-killer ensures that Sullivan enjoys not only charismatic power but unexplained prison privileges: no third-party witness is ever present at the pair's encounters. In a similar vein, Capshaw's detention worker Laury – self-assured enough to cover up for a young offender who has hit her in the face by telling a judge the bruises were caused by Paul – is hardly the likeliest woman to end up under the thumb of a sexual psychopath.

But then *Just Cause*'s one coherent message is that nothing is as it seems: a 'true' flashback showing that Tanny Brown really did extort Bobby Earl's confession at gunpoint is followed by a misleading one showing Joanie getting into Tanny's car outside the school. But where a smart thriller wrong-foots us by showing us truths before we can make sense of them, *Just Cause* plays with verisimilitude so promiscuously that it ought to be charged with wasting audience time. Such psychological basics as the question of Laury's murky motivation are avoided. The corollary of this message is that good and evil, truth and lies are all one and the same. The 'lesson' Paul learns – that integrity may cause harm and lies may bring about good – is essentially illiberal and anti-ethical. It is not until he breaks with the morality which the film initially seemed to advocate – by lying that Sullivan is alive and murdering Bobby Earl with his own knife – that 'justice' is finally done.

The unwitting result is a film which is narratively and morally perverse, since everything we are shown or told is in danger of not ringing true. Plot credibility rests on a revelation so ludicrous – Bobby Earl's hilariously casual announcement, five minutes before the end, that the police castrated him – you'll need nerves of steel not to laugh. The ultimate targets of this nihilism are the very same liberal and intellectual principles which the film initially held up for our admiration. While Paul's scholarly rationality and commitment to justice nearly precipitate the rape and murder of his wife and daughter, small-town and racially-motivated prejudices against a black high-achiever are shown to be rooted in sound instinct. *Just Cause* is just another instance of the currently flourishing Hollywood ideology of reactionary liberalism, in which stupidity and prejudice are held to be somehow superior to thought.

Claire Monk

Legends of the Fall

USA 1994

Director: Edward Zwick

Certificate

15
Distributor
Columbia TriStar
Production Company
TriStar Pictures
Bedford Falls Company
Pangaea Corporation
Executive Producer
Patrick Crowley

Producers

Edward Zwick
Bill Wittliff
Marshall Herskovitz

Co-producers

Jane Bartelme
Sarah Caplan
Jamaica Unit Production Supervisor

Jane Raab
Production Co-ordinator
Toni Blay
Jamaica Unit:

Carmen Franczyk
Jamaica Unit Production Manager
Matthew Binns

Unit Production Manager
John M. Eckert
Location Manager
Murray Ord

2nd Unit:
Patrick O'Connor
Vancouver:
Rino Pace

Jamaica Unit:
Craig Phang Sang
2nd Unit Director
David Wagreich

Assistant Directors
Nilo Otero
Lewin Webb
Ani Baravyan

John Lind
2nd Unit:
Peter D. Marshall

Bonnie R. Benwick
Jamaica Unit:
Franz Marzouca

Casting
Mary Colquhoun
Canada:
Stuart Aikins

Alberta:
Betty Chadwick
Screenplay
Susan Shilliday

Bill Wittliff
Based on the novella by
Jim Harrison

Script Supervisor
Lara Fox
2nd Unit:
Denise Rackett

Director of Photography
John Toll
Additional Photography
David Wagreich

2nd Unit Director of
Photography
Ron Orieux

Camera Operator
John Clothier
"B" Camera Operator:
Armin Matter

2nd Unit:
Rick Mason
Roger Vernon

Visual Effects
Alan Munro
Editor
Steven Rosenblum

Production Designer
Lilly Kilvert
Art Directors
Rick Roberts

Andrew Precht
Jamaica Unit:
Bryce Perrin

Set Decorator
Dorree Cooper
Jamaica Unit:
Ron Von Blomberg

Production Illustrator
Carl Aldana

Scenic Artist

Matthew Lammerich
Jamaica Unit:
Stuart Auld

Special Effects Co-ordinator
Mike Vezina
Pyrotechnics Supervisor
Bruno van Zeebroeck

Costume Design
Deborah Scott
Wardrobe Supervisors
James Tyson

Joanne Hansen
2nd Unit:
Carol Case

Make-up
Key:
Jean A. Black

Gail Kennedy
2nd Unit:
Bryon Callaghan

Special Make-up Effects
Gordon J. Smith
Hairstylist
Key:

Suzanne Stokes-
Munton
Iloe Flewelling
2nd Unit:

Echo Noyes
Titles
Kathie Broyles

Jeff Okun
Opticals
VCE, Inc.

Music
James Horner
Music Editor
Jim Henrickson

Music Scoring Mixer
Shawn Murphy
Music Extracts
"Twilight and Mist"

by James Horner.
Brock Walsh
Supervising Sound Editors
Per Hallberg

Lon Bender
2nd Unit Sound
Christopher Large

Dialogue Editors
Mark La Pointe
Catt LeBaigue
Harry Cheney

ADR Supervisor
Joe Mayer
ADR Mixer
Jeff Gomillion

Foley Supervisor
Mark Gordon
Foley Editors
Patrick J. Foley

Valerie Davidson
Willy Allen
Foley Mixer
Randall K. Singer

Foley Recordist
Fred Peck III
Sound Mixer
Douglas Ganton

Re-recording Mixers
Paul Massey
David Campbell
Christopher David

Sound Effects Editors
Randy Kelly
Chris Assells
Jay Richardson

Dino Dimuro
Richard Dwan
Mark Larry
Chris Ott

Foley Artists
Gary Hecker
John Cucci
Military Adviser
Simon Sherwood

War Weapons Specialist
Neil McLeod
Stunt Co-ordinators
Gary Combs

Brent Woolsey
Bear Stunts:
Doug Seus

Jamaica Unit Marine
Co-ordinator
Bruce Epke
Animal Trainers
Doug Seus Wasatch
Anne Gordon
Head Wrangler
John Scott

Cast

Brad Pitt
Tristan
Anthony Hopkins
Ludlow
Aidan Quinn

Alfred
Julia Ormond
Susannah
Henry Thomas

Samuel
Karina Lombard
Isabel Two
Tantoo Cardinal

Pet
Gordon Tootoosis
One Stab
Paul Desmond

Decker
Christina Pickles
Isabel
Robert Wisden

John T. O'Banion
John Novak
James O'Banion
Kenneth Welsh

Sheriff Tynert
Bill Dow
Longley
Sam Sarkar

Rodriguez
Nigel Bennett
Asgaard
Keegan Macintosh

Boy Tristan
Eric Johnson
Teen Tristan

11,937 feet
133 minutes
Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor

● At the turn of the century cavalryman Colonel William Ludlow leaves the army and settles on a ranch in the Montana Rockies. His cultivated wife Isabel leaves to live in the city, but his three sons – Alfred the eldest, wild impetuous Tristan, and young idealistic Samuel – grow up with him in the stern but beautiful countryside. Tristan is especially close to Ludlow's old Cree Indian scout One Stab, and from an early age is a fierce and reckless hunter.

Samuel returns from the city with a beautiful fiancée, Susannah, who makes an impression on both of his brothers. Europe is on the brink of war and Samuel insists on enlisting. His brothers go with him, hoping to protect him from harm. Amid the horror of the trenches, Alfred is injured and Samuel killed. Tristan blames himself; he cuts out Samuel's heart for an Indian-style burial and takes to scalping Germans.

Alfred returns home, limping, and goes into business. He professes his love for the grieving Susannah, but she refuses to marry him. When Tristan comes home, he and Susannah become lovers; but Tristan's restless, unhappy spirit carries him away again. He travels the world as a hunter, eventually telling Susannah to marry another.

Tristan returns home to find the farm run down, his father crippled by a stroke, and Alfred a successful congressman in Alberta. Tristan falls in love with Isabel Two, who had sworn to marry him even as a child. They have children, and Tristan builds up a bootlegging business, flouting the authority of his brother and the racketeering O'Banion family who back him. Their second attempt at scaring off Tristan

culminates in Isabel Two's death. Mad with rage and grief, he kills one of the brothers, and when they come to the ranch for revenge is forced to go on the run, living in the wild as a hunter. He lives for many years before being killed by a bear.

First *Glory* and now this deliciously overheated saga of brothers wrestling in the great outdoors for the love of a good woman: a pattern is beginning to emerge here. The feature films of Edward Zwick seem to show a conscious effort to leave behind the zeitgeist-bound whinging of his television shows *thirtysomething* and *My So-Called Life* for a widescreen world of larger-than-life heroism. Lavishly inflated onto celluloid from Jim Harrison's novella, *Legends of the Fall* doesn't just aspire to the elevated condition of ripping yarnhood, it actually attains it.

It does so largely thanks to an epic performance from Brad Pitt. The first time we see him riding across the plains as a full-grown adult, his brother tells him "you smell". He doesn't just smell, he positively reeks – his machismo all but fogs up the screen. In the same way that Esther Williams was a goddess when wet, Brad Pitt is a god on horseback. He ropes steers, he steers ropes, he prowls the high country in a selection of beautifully starched fabrics. And when things go wrong for him emotionally, he does what all men long to do: he grows his hair, and goes out into the world to kill things.

Raised in the Native American tradition to be a one man environmental catastrophe, when Tristan is around every species is endangered. "There are creatures here that cannot even be found in books," he writes from his travels – that is until he kills them all. Humans too have an unfortunate tendency to die around him, especially after he has promised to protect them. Even amid the hellish carnage of Ypres, his scalp-taking causes the soldiering community to sit up and take notice.

Wisely, the supporting cast do not try to compete in the untamed spirit stakes. Aidan Quinn – "I followed all the rules, man's and God's, and you followed none of them" – seems nobly reconciled to second-lead status. Anthony Hopkins starts out engagingly, with one less button undone than usual, and is delightfully moustachioed and raffish in a series of absurd carcoats. It's a shame the story obliges him to have a stroke and write all his subsequent dialogue on a slate. The role of Susannah ("she was like the water that freezes in a rock and splits it open") is potentially the most problematic, because the pleasures this film offers women – unlike the romances of Barbara Cartland which it resembles – are more in spectating than participation. Julia Ormond carries it off, however. Her still centre gives the malestrom a focus; for well over two hours it rages, the swirl rarely slackening, and when Brad Pitt finally succumbs to the bear's embrace, it's a hard man or woman who can suppress a sniffle.

Ben Thompson

Little Odessa

USA 1994

Director: James Gray

Certificate
15

Distributor

First Independent
Production Company
New Line Cinema
A Paul Webster/Addis-Wechsler production
Executive Producers
Nick Wechsler
Claudia Lewis
Rolf Mitweg
Producer
Paul Webster
Co-producer
Kerry Orent
Production Co-ordinator
Virginia McGarry
Production Managers
Christopher Goode
LA:

Clarissa Troop
Location Manager
Eddy Collins
Post-production Supervisors
Michael J. Harker
Lisa Rosen
Assistant Directors
Steve Apicella
David M. Cox
David (Wex) Wechsler
Casting
Douglas Aibel
Screenplay
James Gray
Script Supervisor
Julie Oppenheimer
Director of Photography
Tom Richmond
Editor
Dorian Harris
Production Designer
Kevin Thompson
Art Director
Judy Rhee
Set Decorator
Charles Ford
Set Dressers
Mike Preston
Annie Ballard
Mike Murphy
Stuart Montgomery
Special Effects
Drew Jiritano
Costume Design
Michael Clancy
Wardrobe Supervisor
Ellen Cowhey
Key Make-up/Hair
Karen Nichols
Titles/Opticals
Jerry Kitz
Music Supervisor
Dana Sano
Music Editors
Richard Bernstein
Philip Tallman
Music Co-ordinator
Richard Henderson
Songs/Music Extracts
"Berliner Messo (Sanctus)", "Silouans Song" by Arvo Pärt, performed by The Estonian Philharmonic Choir, Tallinn Chamber Orchestra; "Lights of Russia" by Emanuel Sheynkman, performed by Sheynkman, Richard Patterson; "Fair" (from "Russian Frescoes") by Boris Kravchenko, performed by (1) Slavyanka, San Francisco Russian Chorus, (2) Richard Patterson; "Love is Sacred" (from "Three Choral Pieces From Tsar Fyodor Ioanovich"), "Reveille" (from "Pushkins Garland") by Georgy Sviridov, performed by Slavyanka, San Francisco Russian

Chorus; "Bogoroditsa Devo" (from "Three Choral Pieces From Tsar Fyodor Ioanovich") by Georgy Sviridov, performed by Gloria del Cantores; "Techo Fusillé" by and performed by Vladimir Vissotski; "Let the Days Run" by Anatoly Mogilevsky; "Lov Theodor" by Carlebach, performed by The Golden Gate Gypsy Orchestra; "The Boundless Expanse of the Sea" performed by Yulya; "So Many Days, performed by Orchestra Vladimir Avramour; "Introduction to Concert" by Anatoly Mogilevsky, Igor Kissil, "The Girl From Odessa" by T. Sadokov, A. Mogilevsky, F. Press, I. Kissil, performed by Anatoly Mogilevsky; "Hey Bog Talker" by and performed by Steve Goomas, Doug Perkins, "A Night in Valencia" by and performed by Dominique Gulot, Terry Lipton, Rolando Tambini; "If You Were Ever to Be Mine", "Should Dreams Come True" by and performed by Malcolm Barren; "Everybody Dance to the Beat" by Les Pierce, performed by Lorna Pierce, Les Pierce; "Danse de la mariée" by and performed by Micha Nisimov; "The Rookies and the Plains" by Tony Kinsey
Supervising Sound Editors
John A. Larsen
Lewis Goldstein
Dialogue Editors
Kimberly Lambert
James Matheny
Ulrika Akander
Mark Seagraves
ADR Editor
Susan Dudeck
Production Sound Mixer
Tom Paul
Sound Mixer
Mark Weingarten
ADR Mixers
David Boulton
Bob Deschaine
Bob Baron
Charleen Richards
Foley Mixer
David Jobe
Dolby Stereo Consultant
Thom "Coach" Ehle
Re-recording Mixers
Matthew Iadarola
Gary Gegan
Sound Effects Editor
Fred Cipriano
Foley Artists
Alicia Stevenson
Zane Bruce
Stunt Co-ordinator
Roy Farfel
Armourer
Rick Washburne
Film Extract
Nightmare on Elm Street, Part 4 (1988)

Cast
Tim Roth
Joshua Shapira
Edward Furlong
Reuben Shapira
Moir Kelly
Alla Shustervich
Vanessa Redgrave
Irina Shapira
Maximilian Schell
Arkady Shapira
Paul Guilfoyle
Boris Volkoff
Natasha Andreichenko
Natasha
David Vadim
Sasha
Mina Bern
Grandma Tsilya
Boris McGiver
Ivan
Mohammed Ghaffari
Pahlevi
Michael Khumrov
Yuri

Dmitry Proyers
Victor
David Ross
Anatoly
Ron Brice
Man with one leg
Jace Kent
Mechanic
Marianna Lead
Clara
Gene Ruffini
Janitor

8.857 feet
98 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor
Anamorphic

Joshua Shapira, an American of Russian Jewish descent, has become a hitman for the Russian mafia. Assigned to hit an Iranian jeweller in the Brighton Beach area of Brooklyn, he protests that this is his home territory which he can't enter, but his boss insists. Having reluctantly checked into a local hotel, he is drawn towards the family home where his dying mother Irina lives with his father Arkady, his grandmother Tsilya and his younger brother Reuben. Lingered outside the house, Joshua is recognised by a young layabout, Sasha, who tells Reuben of his brother's return. Joshua, contacted by Reuben, agrees to visit their mother, but seeks out Sasha and intimidates him and his friends into helping with the hit.

Accompanying Reuben home, Joshua is thrown out by Arkady, who attacks Reuben for bringing his disgraced brother into the house. In the street Joshua is recognised by a henchman of Volkoff, the local godfather, whose son he killed; Joshua shoots the man before he can contact his boss. He encounters Alla, a young woman he used to know, and they become lovers. Joshua confronts Arkady coming home after a night with his mistress, Natasha. They negotiate a truce, and Joshua visits his mother, who entrusts Reuben to him.

At Tsilya's 80th birthday party Arkady is warned by Volkoff not to shield Joshua. Meanwhile Joshua, aided by Sasha and his friends, kidnaps the jeweller, shoots him at the city dump and incinerates his body. Reuben, who has followed them, witnesses the execution and retrieves the murder gun. When Joshua comes to say goodbye to his family, he sees bruises on Reuben inflicted by Arkady. He holds Arkady at gunpoint and humiliates him. Arkady contacts Volkoff and tells him where to find Joshua.

Irina, alone with Reuben, collapses and dies. On his way to transmit the news to Joshua via Sasha, Reuben encounters Volkoff's hitmen. Both he and Sasha rush to Alla's house, where she and Joshua have been making love. One of the hitmen kills Alla; Reuben shoots the hitman but is accidentally killed by Sasha. Joshua takes his brother's body to the furnace and incinerates it.

"I suppose it was crazy of me," muses Maximilian Schell's saturnine patriarch, lamenting his attempts to instil culture in his son Joshua, "to

think of reading *Crime and Punishment* to a two-year-old." Crazy probably, but at least he can't complain it didn't take. Joshua, and indeed virtually the entire cast of *Little Odessa*, is sunk in enough coagulated Slavic gloom to make the Brothers Karamazov seem like the Brothers Marx. Anyone to whom Brighton Beach (New York version) hitherto meant Neil Simon is in for a surprise. In James Gray's depiction of the Brooklyn Jewish colony – his debut as a feature director – snappy one-liners are as rare as bacon sandwiches.

The same funereal pall infects the visuals. Most scenes take place at night or in fusty, underlit apartments with wallpaper the colour of tobacco juice. Over the rare daytime exteriors there hangs a brownish haze, less a New York smog than the doomy exhalations of the film's characters. Almost everybody wears dark grey or black, and the soundtrack drips grief, with choirs intoning lugubrious Yiddish or Russian chants. "We'll wait ten seconds," Joshua tells his victim, as the wretched Iranian kneels whimpering on a garbage heap, "and see if God saves you." Ten seconds wasted, since by this stage it's clear that neither salvation nor any other form of comfort is on offer in *Little Odessa*. The sole available option is death.

It's largely this ingrained fatalism that gives the film its ethnic specificity. Otherwise, despite the copious display of local colour, there's oddly little in terms of plot or character that couldn't work equally well for several other US immigrant communities: add a touch of surface bonhomie, and the film could replay practically unchanged on the Italian-American Lower East Side. The plot doesn't work all that well though, even on its own terms. Twice we see Joshua, the icy efficient contract killer, in action: he walks up to his target in broad daylight, pumps a bullet through his skull and departs. The third killing of the Iranian, however, involves an elaborately-planned kidnapping and the recruitment of three young amateur helpers. Hard to see why, except that this gives time for Joshua to hang around and re-engage with his disintegrating family.

Yet, for all its contrived plotline and self-conscious solemnity, the film still exerts a grip. Even within a narrow tonal palette Tom Richmond's cinematography achieves subtle gradations of mood, from the sombre near-monochrome of the family apartment to the high contrast, film noir-ish backlighting of the garbage dump execution. The actors likewise turn the limitations of their roles to strengths, digging down to the emotional bedrock. This is especially true of Schell's Arkady, bedraggled and pot-bellied, smouldering with the resentment of an intellectual reduced to shameful domesticity. *Little Odessa* verges on the risible, but its faults no less than its virtues are those of an intense personal vision. Gray's talent as a film-maker is unmistakable; maybe next time he could just lighten up a bit.

Philip Kemp

A Man of No Importance

United Kingdom/Ireland 1994

Director: Suri Krishnamma

Certificate

15
Distributor
Clarence Pictures
through Winston Film
Distributors
Production Company
Majestic Films
In association with
BBC Films presents
A Little Bird production
Executive Producer
James Mitchell
Producer
Jonathan Cavendish

London Production
Craig Murray
Production Co-ordinator
Fran Byrne
Production Manager
Kathy Sykes
Location Managers
Howard Gibbins
Jill Dempsey
Assistant Directors
Lisa Mulcahy
Suzanne Nicell
Mary Gough

Casting
Michelle Guish
Screenplay
Barry Devlin
Script Supervisor
Catherine Morris
Steadicam Operator
John Ward

Editor
David Freeman
Art Director
Frank Flood
Set Dresser
Fiona Daly
Special Effects
Gerry Johnson
Costume Supervisors
Annie O'Halloran
Ger Scully

Make-up
Ken Jennings
Hairstylist
Bernie Dooley
Title Design
Chris Allies
Titles/Opticals
Peerless Camera
Company Ltd.

Music Performed by
The London Filmworks
Orchestra
Music Conductor
Allan Wilson
Orchestrations
Nic Raine
Music Co-ordinator
Denis Fine

Songs/Music Extracts
"Let's Do It (Let's Fall
In Love)" by Cole Porter,
performed by Eartha
Kitt; "Make The World
Go Away" by Hank
Cochran, performed
by Ray Price; "Love
Letters" by Edward
Hayman, Victor Young,
performed by Kitty
Lester; "Mambo
Italiano" by Bob
Merrill, performed
by Rosemary Clooney;
"Can't Get Used To
Losing You" by D.
Pomus, M. Shuman,
performed by Andy
Williams; "Theme For
Young Lovers" by and
performed by Percy
Faith; "Till" by C.
Sigman, C. Danvers,
performed by Percy
Faith

Dubbing Editor
Nick Adams
Dialogue Editor
Tim Hands

ADR Mixer
Mick Boggis
Ted Swanscott
Foley Editor
Mary Finlay
Sound Mixer
David Stephenson
Re-recording Mixer
Paul Hamblin
Foley Artists
John Fuel
Julie Ackerton
Stunt Co-ordinator
Martin Grace

Cast
Albert Finney
Alfie Byrne
Brenda Fricker
Lily Byrne
Michael Gambon
Carney
Tara Fitzgerald
Adele Rice
Rufus Sewell
Robbie Fay
Patrick Malahide
Carson

Anna Manahan
Mrs Grace
Joe Pilkington
Ernie Lally
Brendan Conroy
Rasher Flynn
Pat Killelea
Phil Curran

John Killelea
Jack Curran
Joan O'Hara
Mrs Crowe
Eileen Conroy
Mrs Curtin
Eileen Reid
Mrs Reid
David Kelly
Baldy

Mick Lally
Fr Kenny
Stuart Dunne
John
Joe Savino
Breton-Beret
Paudge Behan
Kitty

Dylan Tighe
Landlady's Son
Enda Oates
Garda
Jimmy Keogh
Treasurer
Catherine Byrne
Woman at Canal
Maureen Egan
Mrs Dunne

Paddy Ashe
Mr Ryan
Pascal Perry
Mr Gorman
Ingrid Craigie
Waitress
Damien Kaye
Foley
Jonathan Rhys-Myers
Vincent Walsh
Paul Roe
Young Men

8,890 feet
99 minutes

Dolby stereo
in colour
Eastman

Dublin, 1963. Bus conductor Alfie Byrne, is mounting a production of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* in the local church hall. He earmarks Adele Rice, a young girl he spots on the number 34 route, for the title role, and tries to persuade Robbie, the driver he works with, to take the male lead. At the first rehearsal, Mr Carney, the butcher, makes a great show of moral indignation. He doesn't like the idea of being cast as King Herod and complains to Alfie's sister, Lily, that the play is blasphemous. She agrees to help him halt the production.

Alfie is warned by his friend, Baldy, that Carney is campaigning against him, but he refuses to abandon the play. During rehearsal, Adele breaks down in tears, and explains that she is pregnant. Alfie goes to confession to ask advice about what Adele's lover should do. The priest recognises his voice and wrongly presumes that Alfie is the father. Exasperated, Alfie storms out of the church and heads off to Adele's bedsit. Here, he stumbles in on her making love with her boyfriend.

That night, Alfie puts on make-up and a big cape, and cruises the streets of Dublin. He enters a gay bar, approaches Kitty, a handsome young man, and asks him for a cuddle. The episode ends violently with Alfie robbed and assaulted by Kitty and his friends. As a policeman escorts him home, he is spotted by Carney and Lily. His secret is out. Ashamed, he makes a bungling attempt to commit suicide by jumping in the canal, but the water is only knee-deep. The next day at work, his homophobic boss, Carson, tells him that Robbie is so disgusted that he has had himself transferred to another bus route. He is also harangued by Carney, but his passengers stay loyal to him. Adele, who is off to England, comes to say goodbye to him.

Alfie goes back to the church hall. As he sits musing over events, Robbie bursts in and announces that he wants to join the play. He explains he was taken off the bus route against his will. The two friends read an Oscar Wilde poem together.

A *Man of No Importance* is set in 1963, the year of the Profumo scandal and also of Albert Finney's famous performance in Tony Richardson's *Tom Jones*. Not that the swinging 60s have much bearing on the events here. The action is set in a close-knit Dublin community where everyone knows everyone else's business, and where the outside world hardly ever intrudes. Finney's role is very different from the roistering Jack-the-lad he created for Richardson. He plays Alfie Byrne, a wistful, charming but sexually repressed bus conductor, much given to reciting poetry to his passengers.

Barry Devlin's script borrows motifs, names, and even incidents from the life of Oscar Wilde. Initially, it seems to be aiming for comedy. Alfie, the surrogate Wilde figure, may be an aesthete but he lives above a butcher's shop. Nobody understands his witty aphorisms. Whereas Wilde had London high soci-

ety, Lord Alfred Douglas and the Cado-gan Hotel, Alfie must cope with the cramped little flat he shares with his sister, the pub, the church hall and the bowling green.

Suri Krishnamma's naturalistic approach makes Alfie's grand notions about life and art seem all the more ridiculous. When Alfie embarks on flights of poetic fantasy, domestic details always threaten to drag him back down to earth. We see the offal, the pigs' heads and the strings of sausages in the butcher's shop. Characters eat in close-up, and their chewing never fails to register on the sound-track. Alfie's sister regards his liking for cooking as a sure sign of his effemina-cy, and his many books as evidence of his decadence. "If I can produce only one beautiful work of art, I shall be able to rob malice of its venom, cowardice of its sneer and pluck out the tongue of scorn by the root," Alfie tells himself as he sets about mounting his amateur production of *Salome*, but his cast is comprised of grizzled old Dubliners who forget their lines or turn up at rehearsal dressed as vikings.

Early on, as the number 34 bus bumbles across town with Alfie doing his cabaret turn, events unfold in whimsical fashion. Even the two villains, Michael Gambon's hunched, malevolent butcher and Patrick Malahide's sneering bus inspector, are comic, ineffectual figures. At times, the film seems like a Norman Wisdom comedy with a little bit of blarney and high culture grafted on for good measure. If not exactly feeble, it certainly errs on the winsome side. The only hints of something more sombre come when Alfie's homosexuality is referred to. (He resists his sister's attempts at matchmaking him with his *Salome*, Adele, and is seen kissing a photograph of his handsome young bus driver, Robbie.) This makes the sudden, belated shift in mood all the more surprising. It climaxes when Alfie finally acknowledges that "the only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it," dresses up in cape and hat like a latterday Wilde, and tries to pick up a man in a local pub. His subsequent humiliation is brutal in a way that seems entirely out of keeping with the rest of the movie. What had started as a gentle piece of whimsy threatens to turn into full-blown tragedy. However, even at the bleakest moment, *A Man of No Importance* preserves its mood of benevolence. "What a funny little man you are," Alfie murmurs to himself after a ludicrous suicide attempt.

Finney may not manage to get full comic mileage out of his role, but he offers dignity and pathos aplenty. It is a surprisingly gentle performance, in its own quiet way as impressive as his drunken diplomat in *Under the Volcano* or his Shakespearean actor gone to seed in *The Dresser*. The film, though, is as diffident as its title suggests. Rather than acknowledge that Alfie is a victim of a prejudiced, repressive society, it persists in portraying its little corner of 60s Dublin as a picture postcard community, full of loveable eccentrics.

Geoffrey Macnab

Milk Money

USA 1994

Director: Richard Benjamin

Certificate

12
Distributor
UIP
Executive Producers
Patrick Palmer
Michael Finnell
Producers
Kathleen Kennedy
Frank Marshall
Production Associate
Alan Collis
Production Co-ordinators
Yvonne Yaconelli
Kelly McKegney Barr
Unit Production Manager
Patrick Palmer
Location Managers
Nathan P. Gendzier
Deirdre E. Costa
Julie Ann Jappe
2nd Unit Directors
Frank Marshall
Patrick Palmer
Assistant Directors
Cara Giallanza
Vincent Agostino
Scott Metcalfe
Aimee Morris
Scott Harris

Casting
Mary Goldberg
Amy Lippens
Voice:
Barbara Harris

Screenplay
John Mattson
Script Supervisor
Karen Wookley
Director of Photography
David Watkin

2nd Unit Director of Photography
Robin Browne
Camera Operator
Harald Ortenburger
Editor
Jacqueline Cambas

Associate Editor
William Fletcher
Production Designer
Paul Sylbert
Set Dresser
Charlotte Garnell
Set Design
Antoinette J. Gordon

Set Decorator
Casey Hallenbeck
Scenic Artist
Rod Nunnally

Special Effects Co-ordinator
Alan E. Lorimer
Special Effects
Bruce Mattox
Paul Stewart
Lambert Powell

Costume Design
Theoni V. Aldredge
Costume Supervisor
Linda Matthews
Make-up
Naomi Donne

Hairstylist
Richard Arias
Body Make-up
Nadege Schoenfeld

Titles/Opticals
Title House, Inc./
Pacific Title
Music
Michael Convertino

Music Conductor
Artie Kane
Orchestrations
John Neufeld
Conrad Pope

Bobby Muzingo
Music Preparation
Bob Bornstein
Music Scoring Mixer
Dennis Sands

Music Supervisor
Christine Barnes

Music Editors

Ken Wannberg
Richard Whitfield
Songs/Music Extracts
"Shout (It Out)"
by O'Kelly, Ronald,
Rudolph Isley, Louise
Gold, Michelle Charles,
performed by Michie
One & Louchie Lou;
"Dreams" by Noel
Hogan, Dolores
O'Riordan, performed
by The Cranberries;
"Iva Biggin" by and
performed by Jack
Daro, Brian Reeves;
"Money (That's What
I Want)" by Berry
Gordy, Janie Bradford,
performed by Barrett
Strong; "Closer to Free"
by Sam Llanas, Kurt
Neumann, performed
by BoDeans; "Cash",
"V's Apt. Blues" by Phil
Marshall, performed
by The Mersh Bros.;
"Some Days Are Better
Than Others" by Paul
Hewson, Dave Evans,
Larry Mullen, Adam
Clayton, performed by
U2; "Stir It Up" by Bob
Marley, performed by
Haddaway; "Talking
Bernie To The Beach"
by James Horner;
"True Believer" by
and performed by
John Hiatt; "Over The
Mountain, Across The
Sea" by Rex Garvin,
performed by Johnnie
& Joe; "Willie And The
Hand Jive" by Johnny
Otis, performed by Jon
Joyce; "I Only Have Eyes
For You" by Al Dubin,
Harry Warren,
performed by The
Flamingos; "This Heart"
by and performed
by Nanci Griffith

Choreography
Adam Shankman
Supervising Sound Editors
Alan Robert Murray
Mike Dobie

Dialogue Editors
Michael Magill
Richard Burton

Lucy Goldsow-Smith
Constance A. Kazmer
Karen Wilson

ADR Supervisor
Juno J. Ellis
ADR Editor
Denise Horta

ADR Mixers
Bob Baron
Doc Kane

Foley Editors
Scott Jackson
Neil Burrow
Matthew Harrison

Foley Mixer
Randall K. Singer
Sound Mixer
Richard Lightstone

Re-recording Mixers
Paul Massey
Chris David
Dennis Sands

Sound Effects Editors
Gary Krivacek
Kim Secrist
Bob O'Brien

Foley Artists
Catherine Rowe
Joan Rowe

Stunt Co-ordinators
Rocky Capella
R. A. Rondell

Cast
Melanie Griffith
 V
Ed Harris
 Dad
Michael Patrick Carter
 Frank
Malcolm McDowell
 Waltzer
Anne Heche
 Betty
Casey Siemaszko
 Cash
Philip Bosco
 Jerry the Pope
Brian Christopher
 Kevin
Adam LaVorgna
 Brad
Kevin Scannell
 Mr Clean
Jessica Wesson
 Stacey
Amanda Sharkey
 Holly
Margaret Nagle
 Mrs Fetch
Kati Powell
 Mrs Clean
Tom Coop
 Holly's Brother
Gregory Proccacio
 Man/Thief
Andrea Afnador
 Gaggle Member
John Alvin
 Rich Old Guy
Jack Arwine
 Senior Citizen on Street
Ann Baker
 Checker at Grocery Store
Matt Behan
 Little Kid
Michael Conn
 Little Kid's Dad
Tony D. Davis
 Taxi Driver

Annie Fitzpatrick
 Businesswoman
Brian Fusco
 Joshua Keller Katz
Nadja Stokes
 Nathan Williams
 Kids
Roger Grooms
 Businessman
Mary Scott Gudaits
 Housewife
Lou Headley
 Old Man
Aaron Jollay
 Jason Mathes
Howard Newstate
 Nerds
James P. Kiskicki
 City Official
Jacquelyn K. Kotch
 Woman
Julia Montgomery
 Stacey's Mom
William John Murphy
 Sheriff
Mark W. Pennell
 Holly's Dad
Ann Reskin
 Holly's Mom
Don Roberts
 Larry the Neighbour
William L. Schwarber
 Tow Truck Driver
Lisa Stephan
 Little Kid's Mom
Darnell Suttles
 Reporter
Lee Walsh
 Matron

9,793 feet
109 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Prints by
DeLuxe

Twelve-year-old Frank Wheeler and his best friends, Kevin and Brad want to know what girls look like, but Stacey, a haughty girl and her meek friend, Holly, won't even talk to them. Tom, Frank's father, is a science master whose wife died during Frank's birth and who is now fighting to save five acres of wetland from developers. Learning that there are women who take off their clothes for money, the boys pool their milk money savings and cycle off in search of one. A thief tries to mug them, but V, a prostitute, saves them. She agrees to strip for the boys, and for \$103.62, shows them her breasts. Frank keeps his eyes closed. They find their bikes have been stolen.

V visits her pimp, Cash. She spots the boys outside and takes them home in Cash's car which then breaks down. Tom arrives home and agrees to fix it. Frank surreptitiously lets V spend the night in his tree house. Frank persuades V to continue staying in the tree house. Next day, Frank's biology mistress assigns him the task of explaining female reproductive system. Cash is murdered and V learns that his boss Waltzer killed him, in the belief that V stole money that Cash took.

Locking his biology mistress out of the class, Frank uses V as a live model. Afterwards, he shows her his mother's dresses. Wearing one, V goes out to dinner with Tom. They meet Kevin with his father, Alan, who had once slept with V. Tom and V kiss and, back home, V confesses to being a hooker. Tom confronts Frank and, as V leaves, they see the weeping boy throw his secret box, containing a picture of his mother, in

the trash. Tom and V recover it and make up, spending the night together. V spots Waltzer searching for her and, realising that staying with the Wheelers is too dangerous, she goes to the school dance to bid Frank farewell.

Tom and Waltzer separately follow her. V and Frank dance together; then Frank asks Holly to be his partner. Alan tells Tom that V is a slut. As they fight, Waltzer pulls a gun on V, telling her that the stolen money is in Cash's car. Frank raises the fire alarm; he, Kevin, Brad and V escape in the car, pursued by Waltzer. They crash but are unhurt; the car blows up. V asks Waltzer's boss to release her. He consents; she returns to her hotel where, to her surprise, Cash had hidden the money. As the developers move in on the wetlands, a lawyer arrives with a property deed: the land has been bought in Tom's name. V is the buyer and she has also bought the ice cream parlour in town.

In this tame romantic comedy, one of the more interesting characters never appears: Grace Kelly. V keeps a picture of Kelly in her hotel room; Tom tells Frank that his mother had a Kelly-like quality about her. Frank himself thinks of V as Kelly-like. Hell, V-as-Kelly even fits perfectly the mother-as-Kelly's clothes. Scratch the surface of *Milk Money*, and there is a story of a repressed sexual quest with Kelly as the signifier for whom both Frank (as a pubescent) and Tom compete. *Milk Money* is actually a thinly-disguised oedipal sit-com.

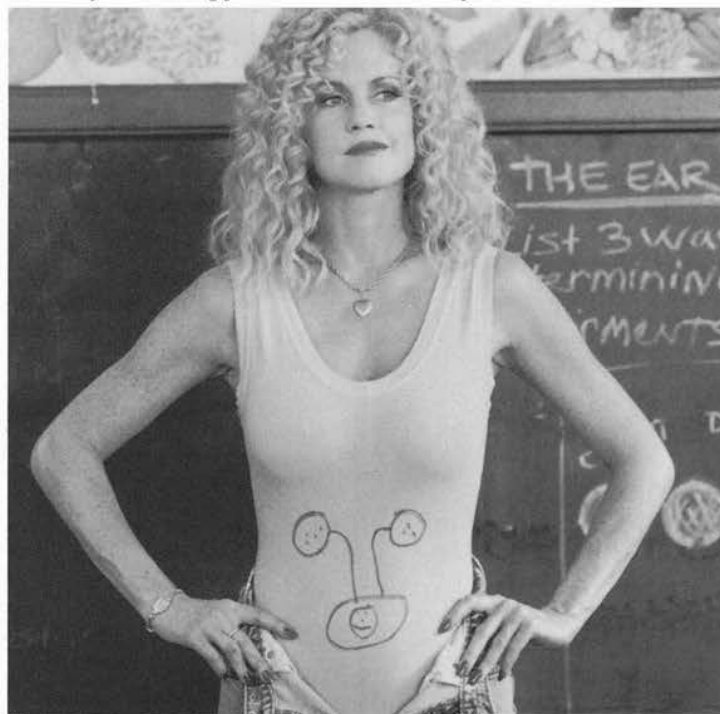
Yet such undercurrents as these are anathema to the family values that Richard Benjamin's film upholds. Thus, although an oedipal order must, ultimately, be upheld it is also continually fudged. The most outrageous example is V's appearance in the school biology lab, as a human model on whom Frank traces the outlines of the female reproductive system. Tellingly, the teacher

manages to burst in and end the lesson just as Frank is on the brink of explaining intercourse itself.

Otherwise, comic confusion rests on three misunderstandings: Tom believes that V is a young boy's maths tutor; V believes that Tom knows she is a hooker initiating his son and, lastly, acquaintances think V is Tom's sister. Hence the illicit frisson to their kiss when an unnamed family are watching them. Resolution only occurs when Frank chooses Holly over Stacey (a *Heathers* character in the making), and V and Tom finally come together. Along with the redemption of V from an arena of perverse sexuality to a suburban life whipping up vanilla ice, these distinctions are *Milk Money's* central dynamic. Tom differentiates between sex and making love; Frank tells V that he wants her to marry his father, she doesn't have to have sex with him. The slap-dash sub-plot, with Malcolm McDowell playing a king-sized ham of a role as Waltzer the gangster, exists only to facilitate the main storyline.

Strangely enough, this uneven quality is one of *Milk Money's* few near-redeeming features. The boggle-eyed McDowell, the car chase and the various dancing scenes are all elements likely to appeal to viewers who may prefer to leave the romantic slant of the film well alone. Yet such neglect would be a pity, because the farcical interchanges between Harris and Carter and Griffith and the boy work well. Griffith balances her smouldering with the burgeoning maternal instinct that her interaction with Frank requires. Harris, the only character who really stands out, is a believable portrait of an all-American figure, albeit in the Norman Rockwell mould. Ultimately though, *Milk Money* is an unadventurous film, a variation on the theme of tart-finds-heart and little else.

Louise Gray



Womb with a view: Melanie Griffith

Outbreak

USA 1995

Director: Wolfgang Petersen

Certificate
 15
Distributor
 Warner Bros
Production Company
 Warner Bros
 In association with
 Punch Productions
Executive Producers
 Duncan Henderson
 Anne Kopelson
Producers
 Arnold Kopelson
 Wolfgang Petersen
 Gail Katz
Co-producers
 Stephen Brown
 Nana Greenwald
 Sanford Panitch
Associate Producer
 Scott Dougherty
Production Associates
 2nd Unit:
 Dara Weintraub
 Kauai Unit:
 Mauri Gayton
Production Office
Supervisor
 Della Circelli
Production Manager
 Dennis E. Jones
Location Managers
 Michael Meehan
 Robin Citrin
 Donald A. Potts
Post-production Co-ordinators
 Brian McNulty
 Nora O'Brien
2nd Unit Directors
 Buddy van Horn
 Duncan Henderson
Assistant Directors
 Peter Kohn
 John Rusk
 C.C. Barnes
 2nd Unit:
 Jan Sebastian Ballhaus
 Terence Ford
 Lisanne Sartor
 Christina Stauffer
Casting
 Jane Jenkins
 Janet Hirshenson
Location:
 Judith Bouley
 Kauai Unit:
 Linda Antipala
Screenplay
 Laurence Dworet
 Robert Roy Pool
Script Supervisor
 Dianne Dreyer
Director of Photography
 Michael Ballhaus
2nd Unit Directors of Photography
 Mark Vago
 David M. Dunlap
Aerial Photography
 David B. Nowell
Co-ordinator:
 David W. Paris
Camera Operators
 Florian Ballhaus
 Mark Emery Moore
 2nd Unit:
 Harry Garvin
Steadicam Operator
 Mark Emery Moore
Video Co-ordinator
 Dean Striepeke
Visual Effects Supervisor
 Mark Vargo
Visual Effects Co-ordinator
 Helen Ostenberg Elswit
Visual Effects Producer
 Boss Film Studios
Supervisors:
 Neil Krepela
 Jim Rygiel
Digital Effects
 Supervisor:
 Sean Phillips
 Production Supervisor:
 Donna Langston
 Line Producer:
 C.B.

Editor:
 Bill Brier
Graphics Producer
 Michele Maples
Animation
 Digital Animators:
 Jason Dowdeswell
 Jim Green
 Rob Ostir
 Mark Pompian
 Mark Rodahl
 Brian Samuels
 Dave Smith
 Brian Steiner
 Timothy Tompkins
 Marc Toscano
 Wayne Vincenzi
 Chris Wagner
Digital Imaging Supervisor
 Chris Edwards
Digital Color Correction
 Ron Simonson
Matte Department
 Supervisor:
 Michele Moen
 Painter:
 Robert Mrozowski
Computer Graphic Virus
Imagery/Graphic Displays
 VFX/Video Image
 Graphics Producer:
 Michele Maples
 CG Animators:
 James Bancroft
 Eric Jennings
 Dan Kaufman
 Sean Lee
 Demian Rosenblatt
 Ira Shain
Digital Supervisor:
 Antoine D. rr
 Co-ordinator:
 Janet Earl
 Computer Generated
 Virus Matte Paintings:
 Jay Mark Johnson
 Matte Painting:
 Illusion Arts
Digital Film Services
 Cinesite Inc
 Executive Producer:
 Mitzi Gallagher
 Digital Effects
 Supervisor:
 Brad Kuehn
 Associate Producer:
 Scott Dougherty
 Composite Artists:
 Carol Ashley
 Kevin Lingenfelter
 3D Artist:
 Sean Schur
 Digital Artists:
 Greg Liegey
 Doug Tubach
 James Valentine
 Pacific Title Digital:
 Executive Producer:
 Joe Gareri
 Digital Effects
 Supervisor:
 Bill Villarreal
 Digital Effects
 Producer:
 David Sosalla
 Digital Effects
 Coordinators:
 Lisa Kelly
 Robin Saxen
 Michael Degtjarewsky
 Digital Effects Artists:
 Mimi Abers
 Patrick Phillips
 Olivier Sarda
 Greg Rostami
Digital Compositing
 OCS/Freeze Frame/
 Pixel Magic
 Supervisor:
 Ray McIntyre Jnr
 Digital Artists:
 Neal Thompson
 Reid Paul
 Jim Gorman
Editors
 Neil Travis
 Lynzee Klingman
 William Hoy

Production Designer

William Sandell

Art Directors

Nancy Patton

Francis J. Pezza

Set Design

Carl J. Stensel

Stella Furner

Thomas Reta

Eric Orborn

Set Decorator

Rosemary Brandenburg

Set Dresser

Glenn Roberts

Production Illustrator

Carl Aldana

David Lowery

Model Shop Supervisor

David Jones

Modelmakers

Jason Kaufman

Greg Stuhl

Special Effects Supervisor

John Frazier

Special Effects

David Amborn

Rocky Gehr

Kevin S. Quibell

Ken Ebert

Michael Burke

Francis Pennington

Jim Jolly

Joe Pancake

Steven Riley

Dana Wozniak

James D. Schwalm

Newton R. Wimer

Animatronic Monkey

Rick Lazzarini

Miniature Pyrotechnics

William Klinger

Costume Design

Erica Edell Phillips

Biohazard Suits:

Christopher Gilman

Maralyn Madsen

Costume Supervisors

Tom R. Numbers

Linda Serjani-Fasmer

Make-up Artists

Susan A. Cabral

Ellis Burman

Monty Westmore

2nd Unit:

June Haymore-

Westmore

Motaba Special Make-up

Effects

Matthew W. Mungle

John E. Jackson

Key Hairstylist

Virginia Hadfield

2nd Unit:

Diane Pepper

Title Design

Nina Saxon Film

Design

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Music

James Newton Howard

Music Conductor

Artie Kane

Orchestrators

Robert Elhai

Brad Dechter

Chris Boardman

James Newton Howard

Music Editor

Jim Weidman

Music Co-producer

Michael Mason

Songs

"If You Don't Love Me

(I'll Kill Myself)" by

and performed by Pete

Droge; "Days of Wine

and Roses" by Johnny

Mercer, Henry Mancini,

performed by Michael

Lang; "Sacrifice" by Jim

Kee, performed by

Voxen; "Polka Dot

Puss" by Scott Bradley

Supervising Sound Editors

Wylie Stateman

Gregg Baxter

Dialogue:

Constance A. Kazmer

Sound Editors

Clayton Collins

Patrick Foley

Mike Cook

Chris Hogan

Sarah Rothenberg

Goldsmith

Dan Rich

ADR Editors

Bill Voigtlander

Laura Graham

Holly Huckins

Petra Bach

Andrew London

Foley Editors

Craig Jaeger

Hector Gika

Bob Beher

Lou Kleinman

Production Sound Mixer

Richard Lightstone

Music Mixer

Shawn Murphy

ADR Mixers

Doc Kane

Tom O'Connell

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Donald O. Mitchell

John Reitz

Michael Herbeck

David Campbell

Frank A. Montano

Gregg Rudloff

Sound Effects Supervisor

Bruce Richardson

Sound Effects Editors

Scott Gershin

Timothy Paul Carden

Dino DiMuro

Peter Michael Sullivan

Alan Rankin

Dan Hegeman

Jay B. Richardson

Randy Kelley

Glenn T. Morgan

Peter J. Lehman

Brian McPherson

Mike Wilhoit

Larry Kemp

Foley Artists

Gary "Wrecker" Hecker

Dan O'Connell

Jim Ashwill

Nurses Gezalyan

Stunt Co-ordinators

Keith Tellez

Marine Co-ordinator

John "Moby" Griffin

Advisers

Military Technical:

Dale Dye

Mark Ebenhoch

Technical Research:

Brian McNulty

Chief Medical:

Donald Francis

Political:

Patrick Caddell

Medical Co-ordinator/

Adviser

Donna Cline

Medical Consultants

Paula Jardiou

David Morens

John Fraser

Sheryl Silverman

Paul Mignano

Head Animal Trainers

April Mackin

Bob Dunn

Film Extract

Polka-Dot Puss (1949)

Cast

Dustin Hoffman

Colonel Sam Daniels

Rene Russo

Dr Robby Keough

Morgan Freeman

General Billy Ford

Kevin Spacey

Casey Schuler

Cuba Gooding Jr

Major Salt

Donald Sutherland

General Donald

McClintock

Patrick Dempsey

Jimbo Scott

Zakes Mokae

Dr Benjamin Iwabi

Malick Bowens

Dr Raswani

Susan Lee Hoffman

Dr Lisa Aronson

Benito Martinez

Dr Julio Ruiz

Bruce Jarchow

Dr Mascelli

Leland Hayward III

Henry Seward

Daniel Chodos

Rudy Alvarez

Dale Dye

Colonel Briggs

Cara Keough

Sarah Jeffries

Gina Menza

Mrs Jeffries

Per Didrik Fasmer

Mr Jeffries

Michelle Joyner

Sherry Mauldin

Donald Forrest

Mack Mauldin

Julie Pierce

Erica Mauldin

Tim Ransom

Tommy Hull

Michelle M. Miller

Darla Hull

Maury Sterling

Sandman One

Michael Emanuel

Sandman One Co-pilot

Lucas Dudley

Viper One Pilot

Robert Alan Joseph

Viper Two Pilot

Joseph Latimore

Viper Two Co-Pilot

Michael Sottile

Gunner Pilot

Ed Beechner

Gunner

Matthew Saks

Sergeant Wolf

Diana Bellamy

Mrs Panamides

Lance Kerwin

American Mercenary

Brett Oliver

Belgian Mercenary

Eric Mungai Nguku

African Nurse

Larry Hine

Young McClintock

Nicholas H. Marshall

Young Ford

Douglas Hebron

Ju-Ju Man

Joe Woo Lee

Korean Captain

Derek Kim

Seaman Chulso Lee

Bill Stevenson

Biotech Guard

Kellie Overbey

Alice

Dana Anderson

Corinne

Patricia Place

Mrs Foote

Nicholas Pappone

Little Boy on Plane

Traci Odum

Little Boy's Mother

Herbert Jefferson Jr

Thomas Crawford

Buzz Barbee

Boston Doctors

Jenna Byrne

Tracy

Brian Reddy

Tracy's Father

Ina Romeo

Mrs Logan

Teresa Velarde

Nurse Emma

J.J. Chaback

Nurse Jane

Carmela Rappazzo

Hospital Receptionist

Kurt Boesen

Mayor Gaddis

Jack Rader

Police Chief Fowler

Robert Rigamonte

County Health Official

Mimi Boyka

Frightened Mother

C. Jack Robinson

Biotech Manager

Robert Alan Beuth

George Armistead

Gordon Michaels

Man in Line

Peter Looney

White House Counsel

Conrad Bachmann

California Governor

Cary J. Pitts

Anchorman

Cynthia Harrison

Co-anchor

Marcus Hennessy

Station Manager

Albert Owens

Broadcast Director

David Silverbrand

TV Reporter

Julie Araskog

Janet Adams

Frank Rostani

Senator Rosales

George Christy

Senator

Bruce Isacson

Jaffe

Marilyn Brandt

Ford's Secretary

Philip Handy

Sergeant Meyer

Tom Frazee

Moses Williams

Roland Tsui

Keith Butler

Davi Lee Phillips

MPs

Ralph Miller

Mark Brown

Officers

Jim Antonio

Dr Drew Reynolds

11,524 feet

128 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Technicolor

an alert. The ship docks and an animal supplier, Jimbo Scott, smuggles the monkey in, taking it to Rudy's Pet Shop in the small town of Cedar Creek. Rudy rejects the animal, which scratches him, and Jimbo releases it in the woods before flying to Boston to meet his girlfriend, Alice. He collapses on arrival, and he and Alice are examined by Robbie, who has been notified, before they die. In Cedar Creek Rudy falls ill and dies; his blood infects a lab assistant, Henry, who is taken ill in a crowded cinema. As the infection spreads, Sam (defying Ford's orders) arrives with massive army backup, and quarantines the whole town. Robbie flies in with her team.

The monkey, loose in the woods, is adopted by a little girl, Sarah Jeffries. Casey deduces that the virus has mutated, and that the original host carries both strains – as well as the antidote. The source of infection is traced back to the pet shop. In Washington a Presidential Committee briefed by McClintock decides to bomb Cedar Creek to eliminate the virus. When quantities of antidote to the original virus (though not to the mutated strain) are sent by Ford, Sam realises that motuba was deliberately developed for germ warfare purposes. Casey and Robbie succumb to the fever, while Sam, threatened with arrest by McClintock, flees with Salt in a hijacked helicopter.

Sam and Salt trace the Korean ship and board it, finding a picture of the monkey which they broadcast on television. Sarah's mother contacts Sam; the monkey is captured and taken back to Cedar Creek, despite McClintock's pursuing helicopters. The antidote is synthesised and patients start recovering, but despite Ford's opposition and Sam's desperate pleas, McClintock orders the bombing to proceed. Sam and Salt take off and block the bomber's path with their helicopter. The bomb falls in the sea, and Ford places McClintock under arrest. Robbie, saved by the antidote, is reconciled with Sam.

Outbreak takes its inspiration from a true incident and a persistent rumour. In 1989, an incurable haemorrhagic viral infection broke out among imported Phillipino monkeys in Reston, Virginia; and for years the myth has circulated, insidious and alarmingly plausible, that Aids originated in a germ warfare experiment that went badly wrong. There's clearly enough makings here for a powerful and disturbing film that could, within the potent metaphor of disease as warfare, align the criminal irresponsibility of government

Poetic Justice

USA 1993

Director: John Singleton

Certificate

15
Distributor
 Columbia TriStar
Production Company
 Columbia Pictures Corporation
 association with
Producer
 Steve Nicolaides
 John Singleton
Associate Producer
 D. Alonzo Williams
Production Co-ordinator
 Linda Folsom
Unit Production Manager
 Steve Nicolaides
Location Manager
 Kokayi Ampah
2nd Unit Director
 Peter A. Ramsey
Assistant Directors
 Don Wilkerson
 Simone Farber
 Janice Jackson
Casting
 Robi Reed
Screenplay
 John Singleton
Script Supervisor
 Dawn Gilliam
Director of Photography
 Peter Lyons Collister
Camera Operator
 Anthony Gaudio
Editor
 Bruce Cannon
Production Designer
 Keith Brian Burns
Art Director
 Kirk M. Petrucci
Set Decorator
 Dan May
Special Effects
 Eric Rylander
Costume Design
 Darryle Johnson
Costume Supervisors
 Shirlene Williams
 John K. Lemons
Make-up
 Alvechia Ewing
 Susan A. Cabral
Hairstylist
 Pauletta O. Lewis
Music
 Stanley Clarke
Music Consultant
 Paul Stewart
Music Editor
 Lisé Richardson
Songs/Music Extracts
 "Between the Sheets"
 by O'Kelly, Ronald,
 Rudolph, Ernie, Marvin
 Isley, Chris Jasper,
 performed by The Isley
 Brothers; "Bonita
 Applebum" by John
 William Davis, Ali
 Shaheed Jones-
 Muhammad, O'Kelly,
 Ronald, Rudolph,
 Ernie, Marvin Isley,
 Chris Jasper, performed
 by A Tribe Called Quest;
 "One In A Million" by
 Peter Phillips, Corey
 Penn, performed by
 Pete Rock, C.L. Smooth;
 "Call Me A Mack" by
 Tim Thomas, Ted
 Bishop, Usher
 Raymond, performed
 by Usher Raymond;
 "Smoking Sticks",
 "Can A Corn", "Sticky
 Fingers" by Artis Ivey
 Jnr, Bryan Dobbs,
 performed by Coolio;
 "Waiting for You" by
 Derek Allen, performed
 by Tony! Toni! Toné!
 "Indo Smoke" by Rojai
 S. Trawick, Warren
 Griffin III, performed
 by Mista Grimm; "Felix
 the Wonderful Cat" by

Winston Sharples;
 "Nite and Day" by
 Darryl Swann, Pamela
 La Sean Williams,
 Cardell Walker,
 performed by Cultural
 Revolution; "Family
 Reunion" by Kenneth
 Gamble, Leon Huff,
 performed by O'Jays;
 "Backstoppers" by Leon
 Huff, Gene McFadden,
 John Whitehead,
 performed by O'Jays;
 "Poor Man's Poetry"
 by and performed by
 Naughty by Nature;
 "I Wanna Be Your Man"
 by John Taylor, Everton
 Bonner, Sly Dunbar,
 Robbie Shakespeare,
 Lloyd Willis; performed
 by Chaka Demus &
 Pliers; "Niggers Are
 Scared of Revolution"
 by Omar Ben Hassan,
 performed by The Last
 Poets; "Well Alright"
 by and performed by
 Babyface; "Again" by
 Janet Jackson, James
 Harris III, Terry Lewis,
 performed by Janet
 Jackson; "I've Been
 Waiting" by Tara Geter,
 Terri Robinson, Kevin
 Deane, performed by
 Terri & Monica; "Never
 Dreamed You'd Leave
 In Summer" by Stevie
 Wonder, Syreeta
 Wright, performed by
 Stevie Wonder; "Life
 Betta" by Sean Reveron,
 Julian Harker, Osagye
 Kennedy, performed by
 Ruffneck; "Get It Up"
 by Prince Nelson,
 performed by TLC;
 "Gangsta Bitch" by
 Apache, J. Davis;
 "Niggas Don't Give A
 Fuck" by Snoop Doggy
 Dogg, Kurrup, That
 Nigga Dazz, performed
 by The Dogg Pound;
 "Stand By Your Man"
 by Billy Sherrill,
 Tammy Wynette,
 performed by Tammy
 Wynette; "Rhapsody
 In Blue" by George
 Gershwin
Supervising Sound Editors
 Greg Hedgepath
 Tom McCarthy
Sound Editors
 Willie Allen
 Harry M. Cheney
 Christopher S. Aud
Supervising ADR Editor
 Bobbi Banks
Re-recording Mixers
 Sergio Reyes
 Robert Beemer
 William Benton
Stunt Co-ordinator
 Bob Minor
Poetry Extracts
 'Alone'
 'In A Time'
 'Phenomenal Woman'
 'A Kind of Love,
 Some Say'
 'A Conceit'
 by Maya Angelou

Cast
 Janet Jackson
 Justice
 Tupac Shakur
 Lucky
 Regina King
 Joe Torry
 Chicago
 Tyra Ferrell
 Jessie

Roger Guenveur Smith
 Heywood
 Billy Zane
 Brad
 Khandi Alexander
 Simone
 Maya Angelou
 Aunt June
 Penelope
 Ché J. Avery
 Lloyd Avery II
 Thugs
 Kimberly Brooks
 Kim
 Rico Bueno
 Ticket Taker
 Maia Campbell
 Shante
 Michael Colyar
 Panhandler
 Kina V. Cosper
 Female Cousin
 John Cottrhan Jr
 Uncle Earl
 Dina D.
 Dina
 James Beeth
 Helicopter Pilot
 Norma Donaldson
 Aunt May
 Kelly Joe Dugan
 Truck Driver
 Suliamen El Nadi
 Omar Ben Hassan
 Jalal Nuriddin
 Daoud Spencer
 Last Poets
 Rene Elizondo
 E.J.
 Benjamin I. Ellington
 Crackhead
 Dedrick Gobert
 Lloyd
 Clifton Gonzalez Gonzalez
 Mailroom Supervisor
 Ricky Harris
 Gangsta
 Miki Howard
 Maxine
 Baha Jackson
 Baha
 Patricia Y. Johnson
 Patricia
 Shannon Johnson
 Keisha
 La Keisha M. Jones
 Rodney's Girlfriend
 Kirk Kinder
 Cop
 Vashon LeCesne
 Angry Customer

Jennifer Leigh
 Beauty College
 Instructor
 Jennifer Lewis
 Annie
 Tone Lio
 J Bone
 Special K. McCray
 Cousin Pete
 Sarena Mobley
 Rita
 Kahili Gibran Nelson
 Antonio
 Denney Pierce
 Cashier
 Renato Powell
 Woman with Baby
 Q-Tip
 Markell
 Jimmy Ray Jnr
 Fighting Man
 Michael Rapaport
 Dock Worker
 Ernestine Reed
 Aunt April
 Robi Reed
 Woman on Couch
 Crystal A. Rodgers
 Angel
 Eugene Tate
 Uncle Herb
 Mikki Val
 Gena
 David Villafan
 Concession Stand Man
 Dion Blake Vines
 Cousin Dion
 Keith Washington
 Dexter
 Rose Weaver
 Aunt Audrey
 Anthony Wheaton
 Rodney
 Yvette Wilson
 Colette
 Jeff Cantrel
 Joe Balu
 Judd Dunning
 Randall C. Heyward
 Mike James
 Mark Miller
 Al Murray
 Policemen
 9,806 feet
 109 minutes
 Dolby stereo
 In colour
 Technicolor

South Central Los Angeles. Traumatized by her boyfriend's murder, beautician and private poet Justice turns down the blatant advances of Lucky, a mailman. Lucky, discovering that the mother of his daughter is still on drugs, takes the child home to his mother. When Justice's car fails, she is unable to drive to Oakland for a 'Hair Fair' and is forced to take a pre-existing offer to ride with her heavy-drinking friend Lesha, who is going out with Lucky's co-worker Chicago.

Despite qualms, Justice, Lesha, Lucky and Chicago make the trip. During stop-overs at a huge family reunion where the quartet scam free food at an African fair, Justice and Lucky argue but become friends, while Lesha and Chicago break up. In Oakland, Lucky and Justice have sex, but the relationship wavers when Lucky admits that he needs a woman to take care of his daughter.

Lucky's cousin, a rap musician, is killed in a shooting and he is upset, rejecting Justice and begging the dead man's family to give him sound equipment so he can carry on where his cousin left off. Back in Los Angeles, Lucky visits the salon where Justice works and the couple are reconciled.

Having used up his limited life experience in *American Graffiti*, George Lucas stepped into fantasy for his subsequent films. In a strange way, John Singleton (whose *Graffiti*-style *Boyz n' the Hood* was made in his early twenties) has also made that leap, although he tends towards a ramshackle indulgence of approach rather than subject. There is a real attempt to expand the wounded black macho of *Boyz* by focusing on a woman, but Justice's habit of spouting Maya Angelou's poetry is just as conventional and far less convincing than the resorting to guns of the earlier film's young men.

Jackson, who inflated her bottom De Niro-style to play the dumpy but cute Justice, may have been cast for commercial reasons, but does as well as anyone could with a role conceived in terms of soap opera. Typically laughable is the moment when Justice criticises Lesha's drunkenness by sobbing that her mother was an alcoholic, whereupon the two women hug and bond, stomping on the priceless dialogue exchange "you alcoholic bitch" - "don't you be calling me no bitch".

The bitterness might have seemed less irksome had the film played entirely as a road movie, but the quartet's trip to Oakland only starts a half hour into the action and ends a good three plot twists before the film. The opening scenes are particularly clumsy with a minutes of Gershwin-scored white Hollywood fantasy starring Billy Zane and Lori Petty scoring cheap laughs before we pull back to see this is merely *Deadly Diva*, an Allan Smithee film playing at the drive-in where Justice's boyfriend gets shot. Scenes at the salon, mail office and in the street introduce the characters but never make clear how well they know each other.

This basic messiness is compounded by Singleton's uncaring use of contrivance to bring his characters together. Off the road, the plot details become fuzzy: nod off for a moment and you'll miss the identity of the rap artist whose death so upsets Lucky. Justice and Lucky's partial estrangement over his daughter and even the couple's coy sex scene (which begins with a manicure). Nevertheless, there are things to admire, with stretches of vigorously profane dialogue between the mushy poetry and an interesting mix of road movie incident and allegory. Lucky has a good-humoured but uneasy encounter with a white trucker at a gas station, getting to the pump before his rival by deception, whereupon the trucker stands back silently while Lucky makes fun of country and western music. What is interesting is that this moment, which Spike Lee would use to trigger a race riot, is resolved with normal irritation. The farcical Johnson Family Reunion - a paradise of well-adjusted black people with a bottomless barbecue pit - is at once a model and a fantasy. As an example of the sophomore syndrome, Singleton's effort is less disastrous than *School Daze* and advance reports bode well for his third film, *Higher Education*.

Kim Newman

The Steal

United Kingdom 1994

Director: John Hay

Certificate

PG
Distributor
 Warner Bros
Production Company
 Poseidon Pictures
Executive Producer
 Frixos Constantine
Producers
 Gary Kurtz
 Barbara Stone
Associate Producers
 Greece:
 Hermes Massonos
 LA:
 Serafim Karalexis
Production Co-ordinator
 Sandi McCullough
Production Managers
 Michael Wood
 Greece:
 Yianna Massonos
Unit Manager
 Panos Nicolaou
Location Manager
 Quenton Annis
2nd Unit Director
 Dale Overton
Assistant Directors
 Michas Koc
 Stephen Woolfenden
 Daniel Beak
 Bernie Jones
 Bill Shaw
 John Shackley
Screenplay
 John Hay
Continuity
 Renee Glynn
Script Editor
 Rik Carmichael
Director of Photography
 Ronnie Taylor
2nd Unit Director
 of Photography
 Nick Dance
Camera Operators
 Jamie Harcourt
 LA:
 Guy Skinner
Editor
 David Martin
Production Designer
 Phil Robertson
Storyboard Artist
 Judith Cooke
Sculptures
 Beach:
 Victoria Hilliard
 Wrapped:
 Michael Condron
Computer
 Design:
 Stuart Haines
 Effects:
 Robert Rolinson
Mechanical Special Effects
 Chris Reynolds
Costume Design
 Ita Murray
Wardrobe Supervisor
 Cathy Hill
Make-up
 Supervisor:
 Amanda Knight
 2nd Unit:
 Mike Lockley
 Greece:
 Nancy Haracopoulou
 LA:
 Kathleen Hagan
Hairstylists
 Steve Hall
 2nd Unit:
 Susie Wakelin
 Greece:
 Nancy Haracopoulou
 LA:
 Kathleen Hagan
Titles/Opticals
 General Screen
 Enterprises
Music
 Barry Kirsch
Music Supervisor
 Evros Stakis
Songs
 "So Sorry" by Steve

Torch, Paul Barry,
 performed by Clae;
 "Why Don't I Believe
 You This Time" by
 Steve Torch, Paul Barry,
 performed by God's
 Gift; "Two Below Zero"
 by Trevor Lawrence,
 Keni St Lewis,
 performed by Jamie
 Mac; "Everybody
 Needs Some Luck"
 by Flagg/Graves,
 performed by Lena
 Flagg
Sound Editor
 Peter Baldock
Production Sound Mixer
 George Richards
Sound Recordist
 Greece:
 Alecos Palierakis
Sound Re-recording Mixer
 Ernest R. Marsh
Sound Effects Recordist
 Claire Hunt
Stunt Co-ordinator
 Val Musetti

Cast
 Alfred Molina
 Cliff
 Helen Slater
 Kim
 Peter Bowles
 Lord Childwell
 Dinsdale Lenden
 Sir Wilmot
 Heatcote Williams
 Jeremiah
 Stephen Fry
 Wimborne
 Brian Pringle
 Cecil, Bank Doorman
 Patricia Hayes
 Mrs Fawkes
 Jack Dee
 Wilmot's Servant
 Ian Porter
 Beggar
 Lindsay Holiday
 Jimmy, US Bank
 Security Guard
 Rob Freeman
 US Bank Operations
 Manager
 R. J. Bell
 US Bank Security
 Manager
 Jason Salky
 US Bank Dealer
 Ann Bryson
 Bank Transfer Clerk
 Sara Crowe
 Bank Transfer Secretary
 Gabrielle Drake
 Anthea, Wimborne's
 Secretary
 Chris Beaumont
 Man in Lavatory at
 Bank
 Desmond Cullum-Jones
 Man at Newspaper
 Stand
 Annie Cooper
 Young Girl at Country
 Cottage
 Robin Driscoll
 Farmhand
 John Bowie
 Scrap Yard Owner
 Rio Fanning
 Used Car Dealer
 Tony Haase
 Police Constable
 Cyril Nri
 Council Computer
 Operator
 Bob Sessions
 Mark Smith
 Voice Artists
 8,160 feet
 91 minutes
 Dolby stereo
 In colour
 Eastman Colour

Jeremiah is a London lawyer representing the people of a small Asian country, Golanda, which has been redeveloped for tourism at a huge cost in local suffering. Having failed to prosecute developers Watson Tyler, he recruits an American computer fraudster, Kim, to siphon off Watson Tyler's funds. He teams Kim with timid former town planner Cliff, but before they can break in and re-direct money transfers to a Swiss account, they first have to cause a run on the bank.

Jeremiah therefore persuades Kim and Cliff to kidnap Watson Tyler's chairman Lord Childwell and take him blindfolded in the back of Cliff's Morris Minor van to a cottage in the Lake District where a Mrs Fawkes takes compromising photos of him. They then dump him elsewhere in Cumbria with instructions to call his chums and start a rumour about Watson Tyler's financial health. Childwell comes across the house of a fellow aristocrat, Sir Wilmot, who has a reputation for throwing outlandish parties. Wilmot agrees to help Childwell reconstruct his van journey and together they buy a Morris van of their own.

Tracking Cliff's van down to his London address, they pursue him to a Thameside site where Jeremiah intercepts them. While Cliff and Kim are breaking in via the sewers under the bank, Jeremiah persuades Childwell to start the rumour. Sufficient funds are embezzled to recompense the Golanians and to make Cliff and Kim comfortably well off, as new lovers, somewhere in the Mediterranean.

Whether an apparently dead genre can be exhumed as a model for present day success is a question that Hollywood repeatedly asks itself (the sentimental comedies of Frank Capra are of late the most regularly ransacked examples). But when a British film is modelled on a defunct British genre the suspicion of wishful thinking is somehow keener, perhaps because the search for an indigenous hit formula is so much bound up in the collective wish for a flourishing British film industry.

With *The Steal* being publicised as "a *Lavender Hill Mob* for the 90s", writer/director John Hay is clearly trying on the Ealing Comedy mantle in hopes, perhaps, of a knock-on success for all

genteel and eccentric British films in the wake of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. He is thus facing up to a savage dichotomy inherent in all revivalist works: how to signal the established form and still appeal to filmgoers too young to have ever experienced it?

The plot has the right weather-beaten look and survivalists' doggedness about it, putting two port-ripened aristocrats in a disintegrating Morris Minor van in pursuit of two semi-reluctant thieves in a similar but lovingly preserved Morris. It even provides what might be a quaint metaphor for the whole enterprise by having the antique vehicles drive down a flight of steps and into a one way street against traffic. Yet *The Steal* is recognisably a 90s concern for two reasons: firstly the career thief is a slim, blonde American computer hacker played by Helen Slater (*Supergirl*), and secondly Dinsdale Landen's Sir Wilmot has a line in kinky patter that would bring colour to the cheeks of Leslie Phillips.

Whenever Landen and Peter Bowles are on screen together, the Ealing effect hovers like a scotch mist. Landen at least has the necessary comic timing, giving exactly the right suggestive intonation to his tag line: "It's probably best if you slip your trousers off." Slater's Kim, however, is a paragon of virtual acting, justifying the look of abject bewilderment that partner-in-crime Alfred Molina wears throughout - you have to pinch yourself to believe she is there at all. As an infiltrator of bank computer departments, she is therefore absolutely plausible. Even Landen's lascivious question: "was she wearing a wet suit?" begs a scratching of the head.

This misuse of second rank American talent makes *The Steal* more a reminder of less illustrious British films of the 40s and 50s than any of the Ealing triumphs. *Four Weddings* itself has been attacked for failing to resemble life in modern Britain. The same can be said for *The Steal* only more so. Its self-identification with *The Lavender Hill Mob* not only mistakes parochialism for charm and whimsy for slow-burning wit but it also tries to revive an idea of a colonially rapacious Britain stuffed with quirky but decent old aristocrats which is closer to nineteenth century reality than it is to today.

Nick James



Whimsy galore: Alfred Molina, Helen Slater

Street Fighter

USA 1994

Director: Steven E. de Souza

Certificate

12

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

CapCom

Executive Producers

Tim Zinnemann

Jun Aida

Sasha Harari

Producers

Edward R. Pressman

Kenzo Tsujimoto

Line Producer

Grant Hill

Associate Producers

Akio Sakai

Kenichi Imai

Hiroshi Nozaki

Production Associate

Kenichi Tanaka

Production Supervisor

Vicki Poplewell

Production Co-ordinator

Dale Arthur

2nd Unit:

Carrie Durose

Thailand:

Kesinee

Pongvichitphan

Thailand Production Managers

Penny Kanjanapinchote

Alan Wan

Unit Production Manager

Grant Hill

Location Manager

Mike McLean

Thailand:

Murray Boyd

Thongterd Mahasuwan

Post-production Supervisor

Gregory A. Gale

Post-production Co-ordinator

Stacy Plavoukos

2nd Unit Director

Charles Picerni

Assistant Directors

Brett Poplewell

Peter Nathan

Chad Rosen

James McTeigue

Vera Biffone

2nd Unit:

Keith Heygate

Christopher Dow

Michael Mercurio

Thailand:

Charlie Sungkawess

Tippawan Mamanee

(Piew)

Kainapa Chearabutr

(Pu)

Abhijati Jukasl (Meuk)

Cherdpong Laoyont

Casting

Mary Jo Slater

Steven Brooksbank

Australia:

Ann Robinson

US Associate:

Elisa Garver

Screenplay

Steven E. de Souza

Script Supervisor

Ray Quiroz

2nd Unit:

Jackie Sullivan

Director of Photography

William A. Fraker

2nd Unit Director of Photography

David E. Diano

Optical Photography

Robert S. Hill

Carson Kiel

Camera Operators

David Williamson

Brad Shield

2nd Unit:

Tracy Kubler

Video Supervisor

Rick Whitfield

Visual Effects

Supervisor:

Steven R. Bensen

Executive Producer:

Lawrence E. Bensen

Producer:

Suzanne M. Bensen

Thailand Supervisor:

Watcharachai Parnichsuk

Digital Visual Effects

Photon Stockman

C.G.I.

Supervisors:

Dean Sadamune

Dale J. Duguid

Producer:

Steven G. Cooper

Animators:

Gregory Shimp

Aliza Sorotzkin

Shant Jordan

Adam Sorokin

Ashley Brooks

Barney Dogette

Artists:

Gray Horsefield

Robert Conn

Warren Shepherd

Grant Fraser

Supervising Editor

Dov Hoenig

Editors

Anthony Redman

Robert F. Shugrue

Ed Abrams

Donn Aron

Production Designer

William Creber

Art Director

Ian Gracie

Thailand:

Chaiyan Chunsittiwat

(Lek)

Set Design

Michael Chorney

Set Decorator

Lesley Crawford

Thailand:

Sue Maybury

Set Dressers

Nic Brunner

Michael Iacono

Jo-Ann Beikoff

Scenic Artist

Ray Pedler

Graphic Artists

Randy Vellacott

2nd Unit:

Jacinta Leong

Eugene Intas

Special Effects Supervisor

Brian Cox

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Jenny O'Connell

Thailand Unit Special Effects Supervisor

Watcharachai Parnichsuk

Special Effects

Mark Brims

Rodney Burke

Steve Carpenter

Steven Courtney

Monte Fieguth

Paul Gorrie

David Hardie

Brian Pearce

Marty Scurrah

Walter van Veenendaal

Steve Szekeres

Dave Young

Costume Design

Deborah La Gorce

Kramer

Wardrobe Supervisors

Kerry Thompson

Philip Eagles

Thailand:

Prisana Trachai (Maew)

Make-up

Key:

Zoltan

Margaret Stevenson

Thailand:

Sivaporn Ratana Ann

(Pom)

Nopsarun Phumrintr

(Tum)

Apichart Samrachuen

(Do Do)

2nd Unit Make-up/Hair

Tor Rangsit

Lesley Vanderwalt

Hairstylist

Key:

Janice Alexander

Cheryl Williams

Thailand:

Nopsarun Phumrintr

Kunya Soungprasert

Title Design

Seiniger Advertising

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Music

Graeme Revell

L.S.O. Conductor

Tim Simonec

Orchestrations

Tim Simonec

Graeme Revell

Music Consultant

Andrew Shack

Music Supervisors

Barry Levine

Eric Harryman

Music Editor

Josh Winget

Music Scoring Mixer

Dan Wallin

Songs/Music Extracts

"Street Fighter" by and

performed by Ice Cube;

"Rumbo N Da Jungo"

by C. Ryder, M. Keys,

R. Harding, J. Michael

O'Brian, V. Brownlee,

D. Thompson, J.

Harrod, performed by

Public Enemy (Chuck

D) and introducing The

Wreck League (Five-O,

Punk Barbarians,

Melquan and the Alias

K.B.); "Bison Trooper's

Marching Song" by

Steven E. de Souza,

G. Revell, performed

by the Bison Army

Chorus; "Take Charge"

by George Acogny,

performed by New

World Report; "Street

Soldier" by and

performed by Paris,

guest vocals by Da Old

Skool; "Life As..." by

J. T. Smith, O. Harvey,

LL Cool J, performed

by LL Cool J;

"Pandemonium" by

I. Wilcox, T. Hansen,

R. Robinson, D.

Steward, performed

by Pharcyde; "Worth

Fighting For" by A.

Kidjo, J. Hebrail, G.

Revell, performed

by Angelique Kidjo;

"Something There" by



Game for a laugh: Miguel A. Nunez, Jr., Raul Julia

The Allied Nations (AN) peace-keeping team, led by Colonel Guile comes to Shadaloo to rescue 50-odd relief workers who have been kidnapped by a power mad dictator, General Bison. He threatens to kill them if the AN fails to pay him a ransom within three days. He is also forcing Dr Dhalsim to turn Guile's friend Carlos into a brainwashed, genetically-mutated killing machine. Ace reporter Chun-Li and her crew are covering events for television. Two gun-runners, Ryu and Ken, are about to be killed by Sagat, an underworld crime boss, when Guile invades Sagat's fighting arena and arrests everyone. He forces Ryu and Ken to act as spies for him, and arranges for them to feign killing him during an escape. Chun-Li discovers the hoax, but escapes arrest and steals a device to help her track the escapees bound for Bison's headquarters.

At the headquarters, Dr Dhalsim partially reprogrammes Carlos with wholesome images to counteract the effects of the previous aggression-inducing programming. Chun-Li and her crew sneak into the hideout, but they are captured. When Bison tries to seduce her with a power-share in his projected New World Order, she attempts to kill him, revealing that she is seeking revenge for Bison's murder of her father. Meanwhile, the AN decides to submit to Bison's demands, but Guile and his loyal forces refuse to call off their planned invasion. Guile and his two lieutenants, Cammy and Hawk, infiltrate the hideout. Ryu and Ken fight Sagat and his henchmen. Chun-Li, Cammy and Hawk fight assorted members of Bison's army. Carlos, having escaped, fights with everyone. Guile manages to electrocute Bison, but Bison's special outfit regenerates him, so they fight again. Guile eventually kills him. Guile and his friends free the hostages and escape before the hideout blows up.

After the fiasco that was *Super Mario Brothers*, the film industry has been hesitant about translating computer games into film. *Street Fighter* (based on the game *Street Fighter II*) turns out to be much more user-

friendly than might have been expected. This is not so surprising, given that the line-'em-up, rip-their-spines-out format of fight games is already premised on the filmic, having borrowed most of its imagery from Kung Fu movies. Such platform games classics as *Super Mario Brothers* and *Sonic the Hedgehog*, with their fluffy animals and basically toothless villains, have too wide a whimsical streak to succeed.

Yet *Street Fighter* has great in-built playability, and the cast and film-makers play it for all its worth, keeping the tone right on the cusp between straight-faced shoot-'em-up and self-parodying kitsch. The dialectic is best personified by its two leads. Jean-Claude Van Damme juts his jaw manfully and looks lovely in uniform - street fighting and sleepwalking are interchangeable for him. The late Raul Julia, on the other hand, is masterfully hysterical. Lit from below to accentuate his cheekbones, eyes wide with maniacal glee, he camps his socks off. His absence from the inevitable sequel is to be mourned.

Having little to do apart from fight and prepare to fight, the rest of the cast acquit themselves adequately. Kylie Minogue as Cammy perhaps deserves a footnote for her hilarious miscasting as a military wench with Heidi plaits. The merest glimpse of her holding a bazooka and looking mean is enough to induce giggles in the most dour of viewers. Simon Callow and Roshan Seth take the money and run as an AN bureaucrat and Dr Dhalsim respectively. Blink, and you could easily miss them, as no single shot in the entire film lasts more than a minute. Veteran screenwriter on such action flicks as *48 Hrs.*, the *Die Hard* films, and the forthcoming *Judge Dredd*, Steven E. de Souza makes his debut here as director. He maintains the action at maximum speed, like a virtuoso 11-year-old who has mastered all the cheats on the original game. The gore rating in the film, adjustable in the game, is kept low in the interests of the target audience of pre-pubescent. They, and many more, are likely to find *Street Fighter* mind-numbingly addictive.

Leslie Felperin

Tales from a Hard City (Hard City)

United Kingdom/France 1994

Director: Kim Flitcroft

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

Feature Film Company

Production Companies

Picture Palace

North/JBA production/

La Sept/Arte

In association with

Channel 4

Yorkshire TV

With the participation:

Eurimages

Centre National du

Cinématographie

Producers

Alex Osborne

Jacques Bidou

Production Managers

UK:

Olivia Lester

France:

Carole Fierz

Story Consultant

Geoffrey Beattie

Camera

Paul Otter

Richard Ranken

John Warwick

Mike Wilkie

Gary Wraith

Editors

David Hill

Yann Dedet

Music

Dan Carey

Sound Recordists

Jane Barnett

Chris Atkinson

Sam Cox

Dave Turton

Austin Bambrook

Sound Post-production

Nick Fenton

Dubbing Editor

Adrian Rhodes

Cast

Glen Brodie

Car Thief/Karaoke King

Sarah Smith

Dirty Dancer

Paul Wallace

Hustler

Wayne Chadwick

Media Moghul

the feet

the minutes

In colour

This documentary feature charts the lives of four showbusiness hopefuls in Sheffield. Glen, a young petty thief, supplements his income support by borrowing from friends, robbing offices and stealing cars. He lives with his father, but is not happy with the arrangement: when drunk, the father has a ferocious temper. His kindly mother lives in a nearby council flat and has invited him to move in with her. Glen is the toast of the Thursday night karaoke competitions held at the Fountain Bar in Central Sheffield. Another pop/karaoke star is Sarah, a young mother who appeared in the tabloids after being thrown into prison for three days for "provocative dancing" while on holiday in Greece.

Wayne is the bar and nightclub owner who is managing her career. His dream is to become a big-time show-business promoter. He helps Sarah cut

a record, 'Dirty Dance', employs experts to make sure she is effective on stage, and organises various publicity stunts to mark her first live performances. Spotting Glen at the Karaoke night, he decides to sign him up as well. The fourth character is Paul, an ex-boxer with an engaging personality who hopes to establish himself as an actor. Bills are mounting, but he manages to persuade local businesses to sponsor everything from his haircuts to his clothes. He wants to get hold of a sponsored car, a tall order as nobody has ever heard of him and he can't even drive. Nevertheless, the local Skoda dealer seems prepared to give him a break. He gets occasional acting work as an extra and likes to ruminate over his future with a tarot card reader. She warns him to steer clear of his "image consultant", a sleazy South African who promises to bring out his real personality.

Documentary, John Grierson once remarked, was an "essentially British development." That being the case, it is surprising how far it has moved to the margins of British cinema culture: nowadays, it exists almost solely on television. The possibility that British documentaries could be shown on the big screen is scarcely entertained. Kim Flitcroft's *Tales From A Hard City* thus bucks a trend. But, in many ways, it is ideally suited for television anyway. Low-key, intimate, and often very funny, it works at the level of a souped-up video diary. If, at times, it seems as contrived and as thoroughly scripted as any fictional feature, it gets away with it.

Flitcroft's four characters have been chosen for a clear purpose. Sheffield, like most other British cities once famous for their manufacturing, has had its industrial heart ripped out. It is trying to compensate through service industries. "Media, Sport, Shopping, Leisure," the publicity material points out, have taken over from steel as the dynamo behind the city's economy. Given the employment opportunities, or lack of them, it is no wonder that Sarah, Glen, Paul and Wayne should see showbusiness as their saviour. It is not necessarily narcissism that propels them (although all four have their share of it) but the awareness that they may be able to hustle a living. ▶



Life is a cabaret: Sarah Smith, Wayne Chadwick

◀ The movie opens with a close-up of an old woman singing. This scene, reminiscent of a Terence Davies film, strikes a deceptively elegiac note, not at all characteristic of what follows. "Basically pure bills... but I've got to be positive," says Paul, the ex-boxer, as he scans his morning mail a few scenes later. His remark sums up the film's cheerful stoicism in a nutshell. The situation is hopeless, and nobody lets it worry them. In this sense, although set in contemporary England against a backdrop of crime, poverty and exploitation, the documentary is ironically reminiscent of all those "Britain can take it" pictures of the Second World War. None of the characters can exactly be accused of having stiff upper lips, but they show a similar, resilient capacity for understatement in the face of adversity. Despite the indignities heaped on Paul, for instance, he remains convinced he'll manage to wangle himself a sponsored car. "I, personally, am not aware of you," a dealer tells him, but Paul isn't fazed in the slightest by his anonymity. (Only when the Skoda salesman falls for his patter and decides to offer him a car do we learn that he can't actually drive, and even this isn't presented as a problem.)

At times, the film's optimism is a little glib, and risks trivialising its characters' problems. Smalltime crook and karaoke star Glen mentions to a friend that there are warrants out for his arrest. His lack of concern at his predicament is jarring, as is his willingness to detail his many petty thefts on camera. Sarah, the single mum immortalised in the Sunday Sport after being arrested for "dirty dancing" in Greece, is exploited by her manager, the cheerful but oleaginous Wayne, but doesn't seem at all bothered by his garish stunts. (He hires security guards to dress as policemen and stages a mini-riot, supposedly brought about by her sizzling stage routines.)

Transitions between scenes which appear spontaneous and those which look contrived are often baffling. Certain figures, notably the Hawaiian-shirt wearing image consultant, Anton, and the woman hired by Wayne to coach Sarah through her routines, seem like such caricatures that you suspect they can't be 'real'. There's a sense that the film-makers are being unnecessarily manipulative: the picture might have been more credible as either straight documentary or unabashed fiction rather than a hybrid between the two.

Even in its chimerical state, though, it works well enough. Perhaps not the kind of documentary that the arch-Calvinist Grierson would exult in, *Tales from a Hard City*, is insightful and inventive, and makes its points without preaching. Belying its title, it's a picture with a soft centre which manages the rare feat of seeming polished and improvised at one and the same time. And the film-makers have come up trumps with their four leads. Paul, Glen, Sarah and Wayne are so engaging that any formal chicanery or blurring of genres scarcely matters.

Geoffrey Macnab

Terminal Velocity

USA 1994

Director: Deran Sarafian

Certificate
15
Distributor
Buena Vista
Production Company
Hollywood Pictures
presents
An Interscope
Communications/
PolyGram Filmed
Entertainment
production
In association with
Nomura Babcock &
Brown Unit One Film
Partners
Executive Producers
David Twohy
Ted Field
Robert W. Cort
Producers
Scott Kroopf
Tom Engelman
Co-producer
Joan Bradshaw
Production Supervisors
Jacqueline A. Shea
Russia Unit:
G. Richard Beddingfield
Paul B. Heth
Lidia Lukes
Production Co-ordinators
Robin L. Green
Kathy Sarreal
Unit Production Manager
Joan Bradshaw
Russia Unit:
Leonid Vereschchagin
Location Manager
Janet Costner
Post-production Supervisors
Brad Blake
Kathy Virkler
2nd Unit Director
Buddy Joe Hooker
Assistant Directors
George Parra
Gabriela Vazquez
Tom C. Peitzman
Alexandra Perce
Aerial Unit:
Dennis Donnelly
Susan J. Hellmann
Stuart B. Hagen
Don Hannah
2nd Unit:
Robert Yannetti
Eric Tignini
Casting
Terry Liebling
Co-ordinator:
Roy M. Rosenbluth
Arizona:
Sunny Seibel
ADR Voice:
Barbara Harris
Screenplay
David Twohy
Script Supervisors
Elizabeth S. Barton
2nd Unit:
Robin Skelton
Director of Photography
Oliver Wood
Additional Photography Unit
Co-producer:
Dean O'Brien
Director:
Charles Minsky
2nd Unit Director of Photography
Bill Roe
Blue Screen Director of Photography
Chuck Schuman
Miniature Unit Director of Photography
William Niel
Aerial Unit Directors of Photography
Frank Holgate
Donald M. Morgan
Camera Operators
Bill Roe
William D. Barber
Aerial:
Norman Kent

Steadicam Operator
David Luckenbach
Visual Effects Design/Supervisor/Director
Christopher F. Woods
Visual Effects Editor
Carole A. Kenneally
Visual Effects Co-ordinators
Michael S. Pryor
Michael F. Lehman
Digital Compositing/Effects
Discreet Logic
Lead Composer
Ann Monn
Composer/Colourist
Sheena Duggal
Animator/Composer
Peter Webb
Composer
Shannon Noble
Digital Artists
Cheryl McQuady
Marsha Carrington
Judith Bell
Blue Screen Unit
Production Supervisor:
Cherylanne Martin
Art Director:
Thomas Valentine
Editors
Frank J. Urioste
Peck Prior
Production Designer
David L. Snyder
Art Director
Sarah Knowles
Set Design
John O. Warnke
Set Decorator
Beth A. Rubino
Set Dressers
Howard R. Cole
Loy Hopkins
Special Effects Co-ordinator
Lawrence J. Cavanaugh
Special Effects Supervisor
R.B. Steinheimer
Costume Design
Poppy Cannon-Reese
Costume Supervisor
James W. Tyson
Make-up Artists
Jeanne Van Phue
David L. Anderson
Hairstylist
Gabriel Borgo
Titles
R.E.D. productions
Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title
Music
Joel McNeely
Guitar Solo Performed by
Marc Bonilla
Orchestrations
David Slonaker
Chris Boardman
Art Kemper
Supervising Music Editor
Curtis Roush
Music Editor
Thomas Milano
Music Co-ordinator
John Houlihan
Music Consultants
Sharon Boyle
Barklie K. Griggs
Songs/Music Extracts
"Sky" by Daniel Steiglerwald, John Edwards, Jeff Klaven, performed by Royal Jelly; "Don't Let Yourself Grow Tired" by and performed by Dan Markell; "Falling Into You" by Marie Claire D'Ubaldo, Rick Nowels, Billy Steinberg, performed by Marie Claire D'Ubaldo; "Hector's Folly" by Jim Higgins, Glenn Morrison, Paul Moschella, performed by the Whatnots; "Turn the Page" by Matt Azzarto, Chris

Gefken, Fran Azzarto, performed by the Gefkens; "Tonight" by Sonny Mone, performed by Crazy Horse; "Dent in My Heart" by Rosie Flores, performed by Rosie Flores; "Will Wonders Never Cease" by Ash Underwood, David Kent, performed by Jeff Harmon
Supervising Sound Editors
David Kneupper
Kelly Oxford
Dialogue Editors
Neal Anderson
Patrick Sellers
Supervising ADR Editor
Barney Cabral
ADR Editors
Nordo Sepulveda
Michele Perrone
Foley Editors
Jeff Largent
Laura Harris
Sound Mixers
Stephan von Hase
Mihalik
Music:
Shawn Murphy
ADR Mixer
Thomas J. O'Connell
Foley Mixer
Jim Ashwill
Sound Re-recording Mixers
Gary Bourgeois
Brad Sherman
Tom Perry
Sound Effects Editors
Peter J. Lehman
Rick Morris
Michael Wilhoit
Brian McPherson
Amy J. Hoffberg
Mark A. Lanza
Foley Artists
Gary "Wrecker" Hecker
Jill Shachne
Stunt Co-ordinators
Buddy Joe Hooker
Aerial:
Jerry Meyers
Aerial Unit
Co-ordinator:
Kevin Donnelly
Director:
Didier LaFond
Producer:
Ron Booth
Production Manager:
Stephen Felder

Cast
Charlie Sheen
Ditch Brodie
Nastassja Kinski
Chris Morrow
James Gandolfini
Ben Pinkwater
Christopher McDonald
Kerr
Gary Bullock
Lex
Hans R. Howes
Sam
Melvin Van Peebles
Noble
Suli McCullough
Robocam
Cathryn de Prume
Karen
Richard Sarafian Jr
Dominic
Lori Lynn Dickerson
Helicopter Newscaster
Terry Finn
Birthday Mom
Martha Vazquez
Newscaster
Tim Kelleher
Brooke Langton
Tim Lounibos
Jump Junkies
Sofia Shinas
Broken Legs
Matthew Mazuroski
Jump Instructor "Tom"
Cindi Shope
Babe
Chester Bennett
Vlad
Billy Hank Hooker
John C. Meier
Gunmen
Mr Shutov
Foreign Minister
Terry Summers
Cashier
Sandy Gibbons
Greyhound Clerk
Sam Smiley
Corvette Owner
Kurek Ashley
Cargo Pilot
Rance Howard
Stunt Pilot/Chuck
Paul Guyot
Car Wash Attendant
Robert L. Lee
Michael Gaughan
FAA Inspectors
James R. Wilson
Bartender
Michelle Crisa
Stewardess

9,178 feet
102 minutes
Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor
Prints by
Technicolor
Anamorphic



Swoops apocalypse: Nastassja Kinski

dent'. Giving chase to the same aircraft leads him to an abandoned building in the desert and the revelation that Chris is alive, having faked her own demise by means of a body double thrown from the second plane.

Without further adieu the pair retrieve a computer mini-disc from a nearby industrial installation, narrowly escaping the attentions of peroxidised Russian mafia assassin Kerr and his henchmen. Taking shelter in a deserted shack, Morrow explains that she's a KGB agent tracking down a planeload of gold originally destined for humanitarian aid in Moscow but which has been hijacked by a renegade band of her ex-colleagues in cahoots with the Russian mafia. At the next town, Brodie's resentment at feeling used prompts the two to part despite the romantic attraction flickering between them, but his change of heart sees him commandeering a small plane to rescue Morrow from airborne kidnappers Kerr and Pinkwater (the latter a KGB man all along). A daring struggle in mid-air leaves Kerr dead and Brodie and Morrow parachuting to safety, while a further tussle on the ground dispatches Pinkwater too. Damage from the fight has forced the Russian plane to land and be surrounded by police. As a reward for their bravery, Morrow and Brodie receive gold medals from the Russian president in Moscow.

That James Cameron's *Terminator 2* and *True Lies* have upped the stakes on the thrills Hollywood action pics are routinely required to deliver is clearly evident from this counterpart to John Badham's *Drop Zone* in a mini-cycle of skydiving stunt spectaculars. *Terminal Velocity* marks the big time calling card of up-and-coming mayhem specialist Deran Sarafian after a number of noteworthy video rental titles (*Gun Men* and *Road Flower* among them). While the most recent benchmark in aerial sequences has obviously been Kathryn Bigelow's *Point Break*, what

Having witnessed a jumbo jet landing at night in the middle of Arizona's Sonoran desert, a female Russian agent in the area is murdered just after reporting it to her superiors. Meanwhile, Phoenix-based daredevil skydiver Ditch Brodie has his parachuting school shut down by the Federal Aviation Authority when he takes apparent aerial neophyte Chris Morrow for her first lesson, only to have her jump out of the plane without him and plummet to her death. Further investigation on Brodie's part leads him to the same apartment where the Russian agent was killed, a tussle with the same blonde-haired assailant and the discovery of a Russian identity card revealing Morrow as an experienced skydiver. Under threat of a manslaughter charge from DA Ben Pinkwater, Brodie seeks the help of a colleague's video evidence and identifies another plane in the air at the time of the 'acci-

Sarafian achieves here in the film's major setpiece goes further than the mid-air tussle between Reeves and Swayze, but it also reinforces the tension that exists in Cameron's recent work between digital imaging technology and the no-frills, no-effects footage that confirms that, yes, the stuntmen are actually there risking their lives.

The sequence in question involves a red convertible thrown out the back of a cargo plane with stunt doubles for daredevil skydiver Charlie Sheen in the driving seat, for Russian mafia heavy Christopher McDonald hanging on to the windshield, and for Nastassja Kinski locked in the boot. In the course of the next few minutes, 'Sheen' punches out the villain who falls to his death, then clammers along to the trunk to extricate 'Kinski' and usher her to safety as she holds on to him while he opens his parachute. Intercutting the usual wind-swept close-ups of the major players plus computer manufactured low-angle shots of the vehicle hurtling to the ground and narrowly passing the camera on its way, Sarafian knows that the money shot here isn't the extremely expensive morphed inserts but the long-shot showing the real stunt people perilously going about their business in mid-air, and the whole segment carries a very definite visceral thrill because so much of his coverage is gathered in this way. Ironically, despite the vast bounds in filmmaking technology, the way to thrill an audience still lies in depicting unadorned physical danger that has its celluloid antecedents as far back as Mack Sennett, Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd.

Although it might seem unbalanced to concentrate so much on a single sequence, it is the only point at which the film transcends routine. Marshalling the various players into position for it does seem the entire narrative's *raison d'être*. The sub-Vertigo revelation about Kinski's death in the first reel, for instance, isn't especially surprising in itself but it does allow the film-makers to pulp one body ('Terminal Velocity' is a technical term from coroners' reports on such incidents) to show the fatal risks inherent in jumping out of planes from a great height. Charlie Sheen doesn't have the physical command to put over iron man heroics in the Schwarzenegger or Stallone mould so he partly plays it for laughs, while Kinski, cast perhaps for her 'foreignness', seems slightly too mature to be doing all this running and jumping around.

Add the perfunctory deployment of cartoon-strip villains embodying the twin menace of both KGB and mafia, the lack of any psychological motivation for Sheen's death-defying antics and the machine-tooled suggestion of attraction between male and female leads and you have a dispiritingly formulaic context for the showmanship of the major stunt sequence already described. Sadly, without the pull of genuine audience involvement, the moviemakers virtually throw it away.

Trevor Johnston

Thin Ice

United Kingdom 1994

Director: Fiona Cunningham Reid

Certificate

12

Distributor

ICA Projects

Co-producer/Line Producer

Martien Coucke

Production Manager

Jo Smith

Assistant Directors

Katrin Strong

Julian Hearne

Cilla Ware

Screenplay

Fiona Cunningham

Reid

Geraldine Sherman

Script Supervisor

Ruth Little

Ewa Halliday

Script Editor

Ruth Little

Director of Photography

Belinda Parsons

Rostrum Photography

Ken Morse

Camera Operator

Belinda Parsons

New York:

Ueli Steiger

Editor

Rodney Sims

Production Designer

Patricia Boulter

Costume Design

Katy McPhee

Costume Supervisor

Pamela Maynard

Make-up/Hair

Thelma Matthews

Titles/Opticals

Castles Bureau

Music

Claire Van Kampen

Additional:

Richard Allen

Pete Baillie

Competition Music:

Diane McLoughlin

Club Music:

Simon Smart

Warren Bennett

Club Music

Produced by:

The Shabiere Brothers

Music Extracts

'Voices of Spring

Waltz' by Johann

Strauss

Skating Choreography

Eamon Geoghegan

Sound Recordist

Diana Ruston

Cast

Charlotte Avery

Natalie

Sabra Williams

Steffi

James Dreyfus

Greg

Clare Higgins

Fiona

Sir Ian McKellen

Himself

Guy Williams

Charles

Barbara New

Felicity

Martha Freud

Cosima

Suzanne Bertish

Lotte

Cathryn Harrison

Vandy

Eamon Geoghegan

Eamon

Gwyneth Strong

Cath

Nimmy March

Lisa

Jimmy Gardner

Old Man

Laura Moore

Linda Carney

New York Lesbian

Skaters

Patsy Chilton

Patsy

Jo Smith

Blonde at the Ice Rink

Victoria Lennox

Justice of the Peace

Melissa Hunt

Bride

The Jemmettes

Bridesmaids

Wendy Harris

Doorwoman at Club

Carole Murcia

Woman at Desk in Club

Pamela Maynard

Cath's Secretary

Joanna Bowen

Clarissa

Michael Wade

Mike

Jack Freud

Newspaper Boy

Geraldine Sherman

Dena

8,268 feet

92 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

London. Only weeks before the start of New York's Gay Games, Steffi, a black photographer, is dumped by her ice skating partner and lover, Lisa. Meanwhile, Natalie - white, straight and middle class - has nightmares about her father's suicide, and lives for ice skating lessons given by Lotte, a middle-European émigré. Natalie and her mother Felicity live at her older sister Fiona's place, along with Fiona's husband, Charles, and their daughter, Cosima.

Steffi meets Natalie at the rink and invites her to a club. She wants a new partner for a project she is working on with her journalist friend Greg. Promising big name interviews and glamorous lesbian skaters, they persuade Cath, an editor at the *Observer's Life* magazine, to commission an article on the Games. After Charles makes a pass at her, Natalie agrees to become Steffi's new skating partner, although she has yet to learn the gay context of the

competition.

The girls spend a weekend with Greg at the country house of his former lover, Andrew, where Natalie finds pictures of Steffi with Lisa. Natalie tells Steffi about her father's suicide following losses at the Lloyd's insurance market. Natalie questions the two friends about their interest in the competition: Greg explains the nature of the Games, but assures her that they are open to heterosexuals. A late night dance practice for the girls leads to a tentative embrace, and they spend the night together. Their ice routine improves. Natalie meets Vandy, another of Steffi's ex-lovers, who shows Natalie the dummy layout that Greg has made for the Games article. Shocked at its tawdry tone, she leaves. Steffi pursues her home, where Natalie tells her that she feels hurt by Steffi's casual attitude since they slept together, and withdraws from the competition.

Disheartened, Greg and Steffi visit Hyde Park to view the Aids quilt. A chance meeting with Ian McKellen secures Greg a promise of an interview in New York. In Manhattan, Greg and Steffi prepare for their article, reconciled to running the story with an alternative lesbian couple. Back in London, Natalie seeks advice from Felicity and Lotte. After a row with Fiona, Natalie tells her about Charles making a pass, then she travels to New York where she is reunited with her friends. With Greg and McKellen amongst the spectators, she and Steffi win the ice dance competition and, afterwards, join a million other people for the Stonewall march. In Central Park, Natalie kisses Steffi passionately. As the film closes we see pictures of them both on the cover of *Life* and of Fiona, aghast, reading the article.

Films in which a love interest develops between heterosexual and homosexual characters often rely on some post-coital angst scenes of the 'Am I, aren't I?' variety. *Thin Ice* is unusual in that it doesn't. Natalie seems completely unfazed about her night of passion, discussing it with just about anyone who will listen. In fact, if anyone is ambivalent, it's Steffi; her string of past lovers suggests that she has Lothario tendencies.

Even if Natalie's phlegmatic attitude

to sexuality doesn't quite ring true, it at least frees Fiona Cunningham Reid's debut feature film to be what it purports: a relatively uncomplicated love story made on a tiny - approximately £160,000 - budget. This last detail is not incidental to the action. Lingerings shots of various scenes in England and New York - including a London club, the Cambridgeshire countryside, the Aids quilt, the Stonewall march and the 1994 Gay Games themselves - suggest an attempt to pad out the story with low cost footage, but they also give the film a documentary feel.

Reid, a former cinematographer and camera operator, pulled the entire film proposal together within seven months. Her budgetary limitations required that her two young leads, Williams and Avery not only act, but also learn to skate well enough to enter the real Games. Torvill and Dean they're not, but they wobble around convincingly, and the footage showing the actresses actually winning their medals in real life has an appealing warmth about it.

Taking into account that Reid and her co-writer, Geraldine Sherman, were drafting and redrafting *Thin Ice's* script up until the last minute and the two actresses were only cast during the last month, the film works fairly well. Williams, Avery and James Dreyfus as Greg delineate their characters clearly and completely, although the most proficiently drawn performances come from the older participants, notably Clare Higgs (Fiona), Guy Williams (Charles), Barbara New (Felicity) and McKellen as himself. Suzanne Bertish's cameo as the free-spirited, throaty-voiced Lotte - kind of Radclyffe Hall on ice - is wildly camp and faintly, quaintly funny.

Love story aside, *Thin Ice* is, in a larger sense, a coming-out movie. Unencumbered by angst about sexuality since Greg and Steffi are comfortably gay, while Natalie has few problems of adjustment, it is more akin to the unabashed comedy of *Go Fish* than the trauma of *Desert Hearts*. *Thin Ice* is unlikely to set the world aflame, but Reid and her team have managed under stringent conditions to make a gay feel-good movie, which avoids becoming a good-feel movie.

Louise Gray



Pink icing: Charlotte Avery, Sabra Williams

Mark Kermode and Geoffrey Macnab highlight their ten video choices of the month, and overleaf review, respectively, the rest of the rental and retail releases

VIDEO CHOICE



Facing a new world: Albert Finney, right, in 'The Browning Version'

The Browning Version

Director Mike Figgis/UK 1994

This underrated adaptation of Terence Rattigan's play packs as much of an emotional punch as Anthony Asquith's 1951 screen version, but without resorting to the sentimentality of the former. Albert Finney is excellent as the repressed Classics master, Andrew Crocker-Harris, who is betrayed by his wife and employees. Matthew Modine

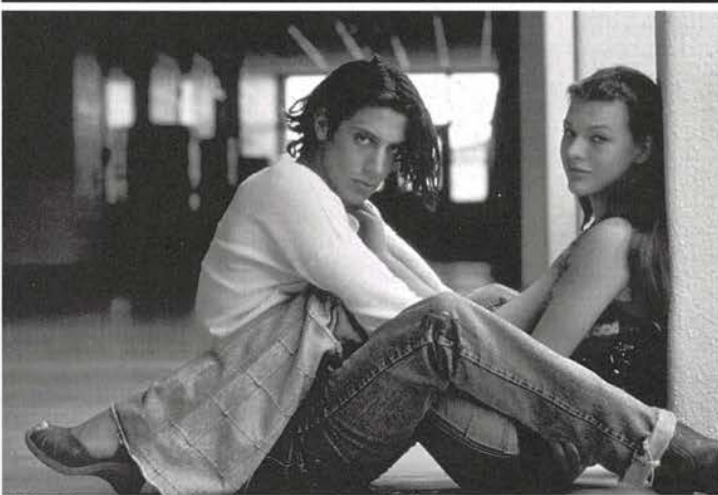
and Greta Scacchi lend strong support, but, sadly, the original score by director and accomplished musician Mike Figgis (who took on the project to escape from the studio wrangles of Hollywood) was replaced by the financiers at the last moment with Mark Isham's schmaltzy accompaniment. Never fear, segments of the music turn up in Figgis' next movie, *Leaving Las Vegas*. (S&S November 1994)
● Rental: CIC Video VHB 2829; Certificate U

The Dirty Dozen

Director Robert Aldrich/USA/UK 1967

Widescreen edition of Aldrich's cynical but often hilarious war movie. This comes with a 'making of' featurette showing Lee Marvin and the dirty dozen on their day off wandering up and down the King's Road and Carnaby Street, while the narrator comments that "Swinging London is an ideal setting for these men, action guys enjoying themselves on the town." After such an introduction, the film can't help but assume a camp

quality. It is certainly a contradictory affair, both thematically and in terms of acting styles. While John Cassavetes, Donald Sutherland and company are mumbling, comic anti-heroes who wouldn't look out of place in Robert Altman's *MASH*, Charles Bronson and Lee Marvin are altogether more conventional soldiers. Aldrich manages to combine gung-ho histrionics with a critique of army ways worthy of Spike Milligan. (MFB No. 406)
● Retail: MGM/UA SO52042; Price £12.99; Widescreen; Certificate 15



Talking about my generation

Dazed and Confused

Director Richard Linklater/USA 1993

Originally slated for a straight-to-video release, this superb second feature from Richard *Slacker* Linklater was granted a theatrical one thanks to the praise it received from the video critics. Back on the video shelves, it remains one of this year's tastiest treats. Set in a mid-American town in 1976, the film follows the antics of a group of disparate teenagers on their last day of school

before the summer vacation. Featuring sterling performances from the youthful ensemble cast, *Dazed and Confused* cements Linklater's reputation as an accurate and astute observer of teenage milieus. Music by Aerosmith, Alice Cooper and Kiss adds an air of nostalgia, while the director beautifully conjures up a more innocent era before the widespread appearance of Aids and hard drugs. Exemplary entertainment. (S&S October 1994)
● Rental: Universal VHA 1718; Certificate 18

Pulp Fiction

Director Quentin Tarantino/USA 1994

Although not as economically accomplished as *Reservoir Dogs*, Quentin Tarantino's second feature is still a complex and rewarding work. Taking as its starting point a handful of familiar storylines – a boxer (Bruce Willis) forced to throw a fight, a mobster (John Travolta) put in charge of guarding his boss' wife (Uma Thurman) – Tarantino sails into uncharted waters of weirdness and ciné-literate mayhem. Even more impressive than the Oscar-winning script is his ability to tease fine performances from such erratic talents as John Travolta (making a welcome come back), Uma Thurman and Rosanna Arquette. Despite initial rumblings from the BBFC, the video has suffered only minor cuts which reduce some scenes showing drug abuse. Meanwhile, the far less gaudy and violent *Reservoir Dogs* remains consigned to video limbo. (S&S November 1994)

● Rental: Buena Vista D336142; Certificate 18



Mob moll: Uma Thurman

Barocco

Director André Téchiné/France 1976

Baroque but baffling is an apt description for Téchiné's self-reflexive thriller. A young Gérard Depardieu plays a slow-witted former prize fighter embroiled in a political scandal, as well as a sleek, anguished gangster who assassinates him. Depardieu combines brutishness with faun-eyed delicacy, while Isabelle Adjani turns the fighter's girlfriend into a tragic heroine. Téchiné's directorial style is a little fussy and self-consciously poetic: a former *Cahiers du cinéma* critic, he clearly intends *Barocco* as an homage to film noir. As stylish as it is indulgent with set-pieces, which range from Depardieu's murder of his double in the railway station to a final shoot-out aboard an ocean liner accomplished with considerable verve, and the two stars work wonderfully together.

● Retail Premiere: Art House AHO 6007; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate 15; 100 minutes; Producer Unknown; Screenplay André Téchiné, Marie Goldin; Lead Actors Isabelle Adjani, Gérard Depardieu, Jean-Claude Brialy



Doubles: Depardieu, Adjani



Boys being boys: 'Fear of a Black Hat'

Fear of a Black Hat

Director Rusty Cundieff/USA 1994

Trying to recreate *This is Spinal Tap* is a dicey pursuit (witness the failure of *CB4*), but Rusty Cundieff's spoof rapumentary is an exception to the rule. Following the adventures of macho rap stars Niggaz with Hats (a parody on rap group Niggaz with Attitude), *Fear of a Black Hat* takes satirical pot-shots at the worst excesses of the rap world. Watched over by television

journalist Nina Blackburn (Kasi Lemmons) the boys talk politics ("Our hats are us!"), attempt to justify their album titles ("Kill Whitey was widely misinterpreted"), pull guns on each other at the slightest provocation and frequently grab their dicks. Meanwhile, established rap stars such as Ice T pop up and are subjected to healthy ridicule. Worth seeing.

(S&S November 1994)

● Rental: Guild G8789; Certificate 18

Mina Tannenbaum

Director Martine Dugowson/France 1993

Martine Dugowson's debut feature begins with the characters addressing the camera and reminiscing about their old acquaintance Mina Tannenbaum. This filmic device establishes a cheerful, nostalgic mood which lasts throughout a guided tour of Mina's childhood and her unlikely friendship with Ethel (one of cinema's odd couples, Mina is thin, bespectacled and intense, Ethel chubby and resolutely cheerful). But what appears to be a gentle comedy about the growing pains of two French Jewish girls, gradually becomes sadder and more severe, and ends on a very harsh note. An affecting piece of storytelling, beautifully acted by Romane Bohringer and Elsa Zylberstein. (S&S October 1994)

Retail: Curzon CV 0053; Price £15.99;

Subtitles; Certificate 12



Disturbed memories



Little Italy: 'I vitelloni'

I vitelloni

Director Federico Fellini/Italy/France 1953

In his obituary of Fellini last year, Martin Scorsese wrote "I vitelloni was a great influence on me and was one of the pictures that gave me the courage to make a film about my friends and myself." On the face of it, Fellini's depiction of smalltown spivs idling away in cafés, dreaming of the big city and desperately trying to defer the moment when they will have to take responsibility for their own lives, seems a world away from Scorsese's *Mean Streets*. However, both movies are equally personal affairs, and share a lovingly detailed sense of time and place. Although quiet and understated by comparison with the director's later films, *I vitelloni* perfectly captures Fellini's ambivalence about his provincial roots and highlights the sense of futility felt by people in post-war Italy. The story is told in elegiac flashback by the one character who finally leaves smalltown life behind but who yearns for the old days. (MFB No. 268)

● Retail: Fabulous World Classics WCC 4086; Price £15.99; B/W; Subtitles; Certificate U

Pat and Mike

Director George Cukor/USA 1952

What makes this Katharine Hepburn/Spencer Tracy comedy so successful is its sense of familiarity. Hepburn plays Pat Pemberton, an outdoor, Ivy League sort with an unerring ability to wallop golf balls vast distances. Tracy is Mike Conovan, a sports promoter who seems to have stumbled out of the pages of Damon Runyon. This is scarcely the most original Tracy/Hepburn collaboration; director George Cukor did more challenging work and scriptwriters Garson Kanin and Ruth Gordon trod this path before in, among others, *Adam's Rib*. Nevertheless, *Pat and Mike* moves effortlessly along its predetermined course, and there is a nice little comic turn from Aldo Ray as a brawny but brainless heavyweight boxer. The ease with which Hepburn hits ten perfect golf drives one after the other, sets the tone; it's a little glib and contrived, but infinitely pleasurable. (MFB No. 222)

● Retail: MGM/UA SO51269; Price £12.99; B/W; Certificate U



Camping in the outback: Guy Pearce, Terence Stamp, Hugo Weaving

The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert

Director Stefan Elliott/Australia 1994

Across the cultural desert of the Australian outback, three drag artists (two queens and a former king) journey to a cabaret engagement in Alice Springs. En route they meet a menagerie of macho men, maniacs and misfits. Shot in gorgeous Scope, this high-art/camp

crossover loses much of its extraordinary visual majesty on the small screen. Nevertheless, the cross-dressing shenanigans of Hugo Weaving, Guy Pearce and more surprisingly Terence Stamp are a cackle-inducing treat, accompanied by a splendid soundtrack of naff 70s hits and top tear-jerking tunes; Charlene's 'I've Never Been to Me' will never sound the same again. (S&S November 1994)

● Rental: 20.20 Vision NVT 22982; Certificate 15

Ace in the hole: Katharine Hepburn in 'Pat and Mike'



Reviews in *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Sight and Sound* are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will be listed only and the film review reference given. The term 'Premiere' refers to a film that has had no prior UK theatrical release and is debuting on video. □ denotes closed captioning facility

Rental

City Slickers II: "The Legend of Curly's Gold"

Director Paul Weiland; USA 1994; 20.20 Vision NVT 21701; Certificate 12
The scathing jokes about machismo and Wild West fantasies that made the original such a spicy dish are warmed up like yesterday's baked beans in Weiland's sequel to *City Slickers*. In a clumsy, opportunistic plot device, Jack Palance is resurrected from the dead to return as Curly's twin brother Duke. (S&S October 1994)

Color of Night

Director Richard Rush; USA 1994; Guild G8788; Certificate 18
Bruce Willis makes a fool of himself as a troubled, randy psychologist whose deranged encounter group harbours a murderer. Jane March fares even worse in her dual role as a man (no joke) and a woman with a penchant for aprons. Bare-facts fans will be delighted to learn that although the film was trimmed by the American censors, the British version features Willis' manhood. Entertaining nonsense. (S&S November 1994)

Corrina, Corrina

Director Jessie Nelson; USA 1994; Guild G8792; Certificate PG
Although the premise sounds awful, writer/director Nelson's tale of a blossoming love between a bereaved father and his daughter's feisty nanny is redeemed by the attention to 50s period detail and the lack of saccharine. Whoopi Goldberg and Ray Liotta fail to strike romantic sparks, but are both admirably entertaining in their own right. (S&S December 1994)

The Flintstones

Director Brian Levant; USA 1994; Universal VHA 1787; Certificate U
Director Brian Levant (responsible for turkeys such as *Problem Child 2*) was probably not the best choice to reign in this multi-million dollar shambles.



Larger than life: John Goodman in "The Flintstones"

Unsurprisingly, the result has a meandering quality which tends to overshadow the jolly creature effects and boisterous efforts of the cast. Not as awful as it could have been (no movie starring John Goodman could be without merit), but forgettable. (S&S August 1994)

Highlander III: The Sorcerer

Director Andy Morahan; Canada/France/UK 1995; EVV 1306; Certificate 15
Dull nonsense from acclaimed pop promo director Morahan, featuring a risible plot, dreadful dialogue, cheesy special effects and hammy performances. The slogan for the first *Highlander* ("There can be only one") should have been heeded. (S&S March 1995)

The Hudsucker Proxy

Director Joel Coen; USA 1994; Columbia TriStar CVT 20711; Certificate PG
An accomplished work from Hollywood's most celebrated odd couple, the Coen brothers. When a goofy but gifted young man is elevated to chairman of a massive corporation, his hidden talents have unforeseen consequences. Beautifully photographed by Roger Deakins. (S&S September 1994)

Major League II

Director David S. Ward; USA 1994; Warner V013610; Certificate PG
Unimaginative sequel to the 80s offbeat baseball comedy. Charlie Sheen and Tom Berenger again save the Cleveland Indians, but a notable contributor to the original, Wesley Snipes, fails to return. (S&S November 1994)

Monkey Trouble

Director Franco Amurri; USA 1994; EVV 1308; Certificate U
A young girl is befriended by a thieving monkey owned by a loveable gypsy rogue (Harvey Keitel). Keitel swaps his usual cussin', drug takin' and gun totin' roles to join Thora Birch and Mimi Rogers in this limp kids' comedy. (S&S November 1994)

My Girl 2

Director Howard Zeiff; USA 1994; Columbia TriStar CVT 20457; Certificate PG
After kissing Macaulay Culkin and witnessing him being stung to death by bees in *My Girl*, precocious teenager Vada Sultenfuss (Anna Chlumsky) goes to Los Angeles to suffer further traumas. Janet Kovalcik's script sidesteps the mawkish plot pot-holes and Zeiff's direction is not his worst. (S&S August 1994)



Freedom leap: 'The Hudsucker Proxy'

Sleep with Me

Director Rory Kelly; USA 1994; First Independent VA 20231; Certificate 18
This self-conscious tale of love and war in arty America trumpets a cameo appearance by Quentin Tarantino. Tarantino's sparkling party piece (co-written by former partner Roger Avary) in which he proves that *Top Gun* is a homosexual wet dream, is the high-point of this otherwise trying independent offering. (S&S November 1994)

When a Man Loves a Woman

Director Luis Mandoki; USA 1994; Touchstone D310532; Certificate 15
Meg Ryan excels as a troubled woman whose life and marriage is torn apart by alcoholism, in this moving, low-key drama. Plaudits are due to Andy Garcia as the caring husband who has to withstand abuse from Ryan, and is forced to re-examine his own life. (S&S September 1994)

Rental premiere

Betrayal of the Dove

Director Strathford Hamilton; USA 1994; EVV 1320; Certificate 15; 90 minutes; Producer Ashok Amritraj; Screenplay Robby Benson; Lead Actors Helen Slater, Billy Zane, Kelly LeBrock, Alan Thicke
A recently divorced mother becomes involved with a sexy, mercurial doctor who conceals a deadly secret. Capitalising on Billy Zane's talent for playing loathsome hunks, this nonsensical, double-crossing romp is passable small-screen fare.

Body Bags

Directors John Carpenter, Tobe Hooper; USA 1993; PolyGram PG 1034; Certificate 18; 91 minutes; Producer Sandy King; Screenplay Billy Brown, Dan Angel; Lead Actors John Carpenter, Stacy Keach, Debbie Harry, Mark Hamill, Twiggy
An excellent anthology of ghoulish tales from the US television series, linked by John Carpenter who appears as a talkative corpse with a fine line in graveside humour. Of the three tales on offer, *Hair* is the finest, in which balding Stacy Keach is tempted to undergo a radical hair-replacement therapy which does far more than simply boost his rug. Wes Craven and Sam Raimi crop up in

fleeting cameos to satisfy the hard-core genre fans.

The High Crusade

Directors Holger Neuhauser, Klaus Knoesel; USA/Germany 1994; Medusa MO 423; Certificate 15; 91 minutes; Producer Roland Emmerich; Screenplay Jürgen Egger; Lead Actors Rick Overton, John Rhys Davies, Debbie Lee Charrington, Catherine Punch
A group of English knights, en route to Jerusalem, become unwelcome visitors on an alien space ship, in this cross between *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* and *Spaced Invaders*. After a funny first five minutes, this descends into leaden humour and farce. The problem seems to stem from European co-funding, which has the alien leader - played by a German - dubbed into English with a Scottish accent. Producer and sci-fi stalwart Roland Emmerich (*Stargate*, *Moon 44*) fails to unite the disparate threads.

Night of the Running Man

Director Mark L. Lester; USA 1994; Hi-Fiers HfV 8291; Certificate 18; 89 minutes; Producer Mark L. Lester; Screenplay Lee Wells; Lead Actors Scott Glenn, Andrew McCarthy, Janet Gunn, John Glover
A run-of-the-mill thriller plucked from obscurity by its prolonged torture sequence which will have even hardened viewers squirming. Boyish Andrew McCarthy attempts to outwit made-to-measure mobster Scott Glenn. McCarthy suffers with gusto, Glenn cements his reputation as the king of the B-movie and Janet Gunn adds glamour.

Roswell

Director Jeremy Kagan; USA 1994; PolyGram PG 1076; Certificate 12; 87 minutes; Producer Jeremy Kagan; Screenplay Arthur Kopit, Jeremy Kagan, Paul Davis; Lead Actors Kyle MacLachlan, Dwight Yoakam, Kim Greist, Martin Sheen
Based on a true story, this enjoyable slice of science fiction recounts the crash landing of a flying saucer in the 50s and the subsequent attempt to cover-up the close encounter by the US government. Kyle MacLachlan is terrific as the flag-waving, apple-pie eating soldier who discovers the spaceship and is ridiculed by everyone. Martin Sheen appears more than half way through and delivers a marvellous conspiracy theory speech worthy of Oliver Stone.

Stalked

Director Douglas Jackson; Canada 1994; First Independent VA 20234; Certificate 18; 91 minutes; Producers Pierre David, Tom Berry; Screenplay Craig Hamann, Mark Evan Schwartz; Lead Actors Maryam D'Abo, Tod Fennell, Lisa Blount, Jay Underwood
Nasty exploitation fodder with higher pretensions. After the opening speech which muses on the nature of male obsession - "suddenly, for no apparent reason, the simple attraction to a woman becomes compulsive" - *Stalked* descends into a world of cliché.

Surviving the Game

Director Ernest Dickerson; USA 1994; EVV 1312; Certificate 18; 92 minutes; Producer David Permut; Screenplay Eric Bernt; Lead Actors Ice T, Rutger Hauer, Charles S. Dutton, John C. McGinley, Gary Busey, F. Murray Abraham
Yet another rehash of *The Most Dangerous Game*, elevated from obscurity by the top flight B-movie cast (Hauer, Busey and Abraham together at last) and Ernest

Of rats and men

Animators have one thing in common – we are all control freaks. And what could be more controllable than the inanimate? An animator manipulates every frame, but at a cost – this time consuming process devours chunks of your life. It's as if the objects suck your time and energy away to feed their own lives. If the filmmaker Ladislav Starewicz were alive, I'm sure he would agree. One of the most popular stories about Starewicz is that he became an animator while attempting to film a natural history film with two live stag beetles fighting. During the shoot one of the combatants died, so Starewicz animated the corpse and discovered his vocation in life. This flamboyant opposition of death and life, of the artificial and the real, is what is so appealing about his work.

The Cameraman's Revenge was screened in Moscow in 1912 and was an instant success. After years of drawing, sculpting, experimenting with magic lanterns and studying entomology, Starewicz became a popular film-maker. The film's portrayal of incestuous jealousy and intrigue is given a disturbing edge by the fact that all the characters are insects. The stag beetles who were plucked from the obscurity of the nature film star in this perverse drama. There is something fascinating and repulsive about watching these insects, encased in their hard skeleton shells, acting out our fleshly desires and manoeuvres. If you woke up tomorrow to find yourself Gregor in Kafka's 'Metamorphosis' this is how you might carry on. The film's obsession with cinematic voyeurism adds to the atmosphere: in one scene, secretly shot footage of lovers is publicly screened. As we watch the lovers caught on celluloid, their intimate moments shown to a crowd, it is hard to say which is more perverse, the cinematic apparatus or that the theatre audience is entirely made up of little insects.

Starewicz spent the rest of his life involved in the manipulation of dead and artificial animals to create *tableaux vivants*. He animated obsessively, first in Russia and later, after the Russian revolution, in France. He was the undisputed controller of the world he created. His studio was no more than a small family business, with his daughter making costumes and acting in his films. His troupe of performers were a multitude of animal puppets, painstakingly constructed out of deer skin, wire, wood and dressed in beautifully made doll-like costumes. Starewicz inhabited an internal world, yet combined his claustrophobic animation with loosely shot *vérité* footage of the real world. He was a storyteller who worked with fables and fairy tales but used their original crudity and bite. He used animal characters to make us look at humans in the light of animals rather than the sentimental reverse. He created comic and grotesque filmic portrayals of the world which looped together a huge range of disparate film languages; films that look increasingly



Dark fairy tales: 'Town Rat, Country Rat'

important in the age of cinema digital compositing.

In *Town Rat, Country Rat* a simple fable is transformed by making the main characters rats. The rats are dressed as bumpkins and dandies, but finally look and behave like rats. They are unstable; appearing sophisticated until the cat arrives and they return to being rats. Once again, Starewicz shows us the thin divide between humans and animals, and by always choosing the least lovable of animals – rats and insects – makes the audience tread a line between horror and wonder. The action in *Town Rat, Country Rat* is interrupted by a long set piece about the amputation of the rats' tails. Rats disconsolately hold up amputated stumps while cut off tail sections gain lives of their own, squirming and worming until chased and clubbed to death. The shot where the country rat holds up his apparently erect tail only to have the tip fall off, deserves a place in a thesis about 'The phallic symbol in cinema'. These are fairy tales with all the darkness of the originals.

At the start of *The Mascot* a toy puppy is brought to life by the tears of the sweatshop labour woman making it. The toy mascot is less realistic, more sentimental than many of Starewicz's animals. The story of the toy's odyssey is set against back projected live action footage of Paris streets, contrasting the sentimentality of the stop-motion puppet with indifferent documentary footage. Hanging by his neck from a car mirror, gripping onto a car registration plate or rolling in the gutter, the sweet little puppet is in constant danger. Starewicz never lets himself off the technical hook. Anyone who has created matte shots will smile with admiration at the mascot sitting in a shop display cabinet: the back of the cabinet is mirrored and in it swirls a Paris street. It would have been so much easier to have had a different cabinet; but

then for a moment the little dog might have seemed safe from the city.

What distinguishes Starewicz's work is his use of material that would seem bland in the hands of lesser film-makers. The episodic nature of Starewicz's shorts is expanded in his feature *The Tale of the Fox*. A story about a cunning fox's rise to power and glory, it uses the repetitive nature of the traditional trickster story. A stream of animals sent by the king to subdue the fox meet humiliating ends, and finally the king himself is fooled. The piece succeeds because the tricks retain the element of glee and sadism found in old folk tales, while the indignities and beatings the victims are subjected to are realistic enough to give the film a sinister feel. There is also a nice sense of irony in seeing animals dressed in furs and finery – for example, a badger in a badger fur coat – reminding us what furs coats are made from. Again, he forces together categories; what does it mean to dress animals in their own skins?

Any animator who embodies as many of the basic contradictions of animation as Starewicz does is going to be on my list of favourites. As someone who has spent time in solitude laboriously and delicately manipulating dead animals to create animated sequences, and then directed the live action shoot for the material they are to be combined with, I can identify with his obsessive playing with binary opposites: life/death, claustrophobia/agoraphobia, human/animal, fascination/repulsion. He does it so well, and he did it first. At the start of *The Tale of the Fox* is a caption which reads: "This is not an animated cartoon, this is a revolution in the History of Cinema." I think we should allow Starewicz his grandiosity, he deserves it more than most.

Ladislav Starewicz: Selected Films is released on *Connoisseur Video*

Dickerson's watchable direction. Ice T coasts through as a streetwise homeless man picked out for target practice by wealthy maniacs who meet their match when lured back into the urban jungle by their prey.

A Woman Scorned

Director Andrew Stevens; USA 1993; Columbia TriStar CVT 21670; Certificate 18; 98 minutes; Producer Damian Lee; Screenplay Barry Avrich; Lead Actors Shannon Tweed, Andrew Stevens, Stephen Young, Kim Morgan
Shannon Tweed tries to give an air of class to the erotic thriller genre. The result is a tepid concoction, treading a thin line between psychological thriller and soft core. Barry Avrich throws his all into the script; Tweed plays a devoted wife, then an unwilling whore and finally a lusty temptress hell-bent on revenge. Where is Delia Sheppard when you really need her?

Retail

Backbeat

Director Iain Softley, UK 1993; Columbia TriStar CVT 20712; Price £11.99; Certificate 15 (S&S April 1994)

A Business Affair

Director Charlotte Brandstrom; UK/France/Germany/Spain; EVS 1158; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S June 1994)

Cool Runnings

Director Jon Turteltaub; USA 1993; Walt Disney Pictures D223252; Price £10.99; Certificate PG (S&S April 1994)

The Crow

Director Alex Proyas; USA 1994; EVS 1157; Price £14.99; Certificate 18 (S&S June 1994)

Dark Habits (Entre tinieblas)

Director Pedro Almodóvar; Spain 1983; Tartan Video TVT 1017; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18

Almodóvar's third feature, a deadpan comedy set in a convent, is about various enterprising nuns (Sister Sewer Rat among them) who take drugs, earn a little extra cash by selling cakes "made with the blood of Christ" and offer spiritual succour to local murderers, prostitutes and junkies. The director approaches the blasphemous material with a cheerful understatement worthy of Buñuel. Be warned, the print quality is a little murky. (MFB No. 681)

L'Enfer

Director Claude Chabrol; France 1993; Curzon CV 0052; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
Tenebrously lit, intense study of sexual jealousy which makes for an atmospheric thriller, but is let down by a lurking strain of misogyny. Emmanuelle Béart is the beautiful young wife, François Cluzet her obsessed hotel-owner husband. Chabrol adapted the script from an original screenplay by Henri-Georges Clouzot. (S&S November 1994)

Forever Amber

Director Otto Preminger; USA 1947; Fox Video 85405; Price £10.99; Certificate U
Stately costume pic, made around the time of the Gainsborough melodramas,



Tormenting the innocent: 'Freaks'

but conspicuously lacking their clout. Linda Darnell does her best to smoulder as would-be wicked lady Amber; George Sanders makes a splendidly sardonic Charles II; the production design and costumes are lavish, and there's a rousing recreation of the Great Fire of London. Preminger, though, is hardly the ideal director for the material. (MFB No. 176)

Freaks

Director Tod Browning; USA 1932; Visionary M/J 020; Price £15.99; B/W; Certificate 15
A welcome video release for Tod Browning's classic. Although billed as "the most startling horror story of the abnormal and the unwanted", this is a surprisingly tender film that never seeks to make an exhibition of its misshapen protagonists. The so-called freaks are treated by ex-circus man Browning (and treat each other) with dignity throughout and are presented as innocents, whereas their tormentors, the Strong Man and Cleopatra the trapeze artist, receive gruesome punishment. (MFB No. 355)

The Halls of Montezuma

Director Lewis Milestone; USA 1950; Fox Video 1214S; Price £10.99; Certificate PG
It is perhaps a cruel irony that Milestone, director of the anti-war classic *All Quiet on the Western Front*, was reduced to making propaganda pics like this at the tail-end of his career. This is a thoughtful affair, with Richard Widmark surprisingly effective as an idealistic ex-teacher turned soldier leading an attack on a Japanese island. (MFB No. 207)

Love in the Strangest Way (Elles n'oublient pas)

Director Christopher Frank; France 1994; Tartan Video TVT 1210; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
Unpretentious French thriller, glibly labelled a *Fatal Attraction* clone. The two films share similar plots, but Thierry Lhermitte is a far more ambiguous character than Michael Douglas in Adrian Lyne's movie. Lhermitte plays a debt-collector who effectively trades in other people's misery, and there is a sense he deserves everything he gets. (S&S November 1994)

The Navy vs the Night Monsters

Director Michael Hoey; USA 1966; First Class Films SF 005; Price £12.99; Certificate PG

This charts the happenings at a naval base on a remote island when a scientific team drop by with specimens acquired from Antarctica. Murderous penguins and carnivorous trees are among the attractions. (MFB No. 281)

Painted Heart

Director Michael Taav; USA 1992; Tartan Video TVT 1213; Price £15.99; Certificate 18 (S&S May 1994)

Paris Blues

Director Martin Ritt; USA 1961; MGM/UA S054144; Price £12.99, B/W; Certificate 12
A sort of jazz counterpart to Minnelli's *An American in Paris*, this musical drama is set in seedy, smoke-filled basements, features a Duke Ellington score and a Louis Armstrong cameo, and stars Paul Newman and Sidney Poitier as beatnik musicians who fall for a couple of American tourists (Joanne Woodward, Diahann Carroll). Although it doesn't match up to *Hud*, the same director/star team's effort of two years later, it's still well worth a look. (MFB No. 339)

The Queen

Director Frank Simon; USA 1968; Unique Films UF 8009; Price £12.99; Certificate E
This documentary goes behind the scenes of the Miss All-American Drag Beauty Pageant of 1967, which included Andy Warhol and Edie Sedgwick among the judges. While there is considerable fascination in the hair-plucking and make-up, the most effective moments are those in which the contestants, out of costume, simply sit and talk in their hotel rooms. (MFB No. 421)

Samson and Delilah

Director Cecil B. DeMille; USA 1949; Paramount VHR 4164; Price £10.99; Certificate U
Memorably described by David Thomson as "one of the great trash epics", this could be described as a biblical *Basic Instinct*. It may have cost a fortune to make, but it has all the trimmings of the most lurid B-movie. The Philistines' outfits resemble oversized watering cans, Victor Mature memorably wrestles with a lion at the beginning of the film and brings down a temple at the end, and Hedy Lamarr makes a marvellously coquettish Delilah.

Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors

(Tini Zabutyeh Predkiv)

Director Sergo Paradjanov; USSR 1964; Connoisseur Video CR 172; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 12

From its vertiginous opening sequence in which a tree crashes down on a woodsman, to its scenes of young lovers Ivan and Marichka in the forest, Paradjanov's adaptation of a Ukrainian story is imbued with lyricism. It won a handful of festival awards, established the director in the West and put him at loggerheads with the Soviet authorities for the rest of his career. (MFB No. 418)

Striking Distance

Director Rowdy Herrington; USA 1993; Columbia TriStar CVR 28642; Price £11.99; Certificate 18 (S&S May 1994)

The Ten Commandments

Director Cecil B. DeMille; USA 1956; Paramount VHR 4163; Price £10.99; Widescreen; Certificate U
Interminable biblical epic prefaced by an equally interminable account of where, how and why it was made. Cecil B. DeMille may be the last word in cinematic grandeur, but he comes across on camera like a small businessman trying to sell remaindered goods. At least Charlton Heston makes an appropriately solemn Moses. (MFB No. 288)

Three Colours: Red (Trois Couleurs: Rouge)

Director Krzysztof Kieslowski; France/Switzerland/Poland 1994; Artificial Eye ART 105; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
Kieslowski rounds off his *Three Colours* trilogy, and possibly his film career, in typically hermetic fashion. It's hard not to feel that Jean-Louis Trintignant as Judge Kern, is the key to the movie. A shabby, downmarket Prospero, who sickens of his obsession with eavesdropping on other people's lives, his disgust perhaps mirrors that which the director now seems to feel for his profession. (S&S November 1994)

The Three Musketeers

Director Stephen Herek; USA 1993; Walt Disney Pictures D241972; Price £10.99; Certificate PG (S&S March 1994)

Umberto D.

Director Vittorio De Sica; Italy 1953; Fabulous World Classics WCC 4085; Price £15.99; B/W; Subtitles; Certificate U
An old man (Carlo Battisti) living off an inadequate pension struggles to make ends meet in post-war Italy. Vittorio De Sica's movie is heart rending to watch, and as a piece of social protest, it holds surprisingly contemporary relevance.

W.R.: The Mysteries of the Organism (W.R. Misterije Oranzizma)

Director Dusan Makavejev; Yugoslavia 1971; Connoisseur Video CR 173; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18
This is the director approved, slightly re-edited version of Makavejev's film that was shown on Channel 4 television to a record number of telephone complaints (computer graphics are used judiciously in the infamous scene in which an artist makes a plaster cast of Jim Buckley's penis). Controversy apart, the film is a fascinating collision of styles, using documentary, comedy and polemic, and

offering both Western and Soviet perspectives. The clips from absurdly hagiographic Russian propaganda pics celebrating Stalin are a treat. (MFB No. 458)

Retail Premiere

A Better Tomorrow III

Director Tsui Hark; Hong Kong 1989; Made In Hong Kong HK 017; Price £12.99; Widescreen; Certificate 18; Producer Tsui Hark; Screenplay Unknown; Lead Actors Chow Yun Fat, Anita Mui, Tony Leung

John Woo-style gangster pic with impressively choreographed set-pieces, but the narrative, which flits between Vietnam and Hong Kong, is likely to prove all but impenetrable to viewers who haven't seen the two prequels.

The Black Cat (Il gatto nero)

Director Lucio Fulci; Italy 1981; Redemption RETN 054; Price £12.99; Widescreen; Certificate 18; 88 minutes; Producer Giulio Sbarigia; Screenplay Biagio Proietti; Lead Actors Mimsy Farmer, Patrick Magee, David Warbeck
Brooding, nasty horror pic directed with a certain style by Lucio Fulci, the man behind the cult movie *Zombie Flesh Eaters*. Loosely based on the Edgar Allan Poe story, this is set in a quaint, mythical English village where the policemen speak in Dixon of Dock Green-style platitudes. Patrick Magee is an embittered recluse who, in league with a diabolic black cat, commits a series of grisly murders.

Le Miraculé

Director Jean-Pierre Mocky; France 1987; Lighthouse/Lumiere Lum 2186; Price £14.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18; 84 minutes; Producers Jean Cazes, Denis Frey; Screenplay Jean-Pierre Mocky, Jean-Claude Romer, Patrick Gramier; Lead Actors Michel Serrault, Jean Poirer, Jeanne Moreau, Sylvie Joly
Bawdy farce with Jeanne Moreau as a kind-hearted charity worker who accompanies a grizzled old hobo on a pilgrimage to Lourdes. The hobo plans to stage a miracle so as to swindle a fortune out of an insurance company.

Not Mozart

Directors Peter Greenaway/Jeremy Newson/Pat Gavin; UK 1991; Academy Video CAV 026; Price £12.99; Certificate 15
Two short films originally shown on BBC 2 as part of the 1991 Mozart Bicentennial celebrations. Peter Greenaway's *M* is for *Man*, *Music*, *Mozart* seems to have more to do with the director's obsessions than with the composer. Unsurprisingly, bodies and food are to the fore and the film unfolds as a list. Also included is *Letters, Riddles and Writs* directed by Jeremy Newson and Pat Gavin.

The Other Hell (L'altro inferno)

Director Bruno Mattei (aka Stefan Obrowsky); Italy 1981; Redemption RETN 057; Price £12.99; Widescreen; Certificate 18; 90 minutes; Producer Arangelo Picci; Screenplay Claudio Fragasso; Lead Actors Franca Stoppi, Frank Garfield, Carlo De Meso, Sandy Samuel
Atmospheric, often chilling Italian horror pic set in a convent and full of lurid imagery of bloody exorcisms, possessed nuns, squawking owls and the like. The surprisingly up-tempo disco style soundtrack is rather incongruous.

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Letters

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. Facsimile 0171 436 2327

Strikingly lucid Stone

From André Seewood

In response to the recent reflection on Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers*, by Larry Gross (S&S March): how can someone ask and answer the most important questions about the film and yet completely dismiss the central point that he had so carefully examined? Gross is astute and correct when he says that "*Natural Born Killers* is a film about film," and palpably on target when he says that the film is "an attempt to look at how an 'image culture' has taken over from immediate experience." But he is completely incoherent when he says that the film is a failure as a work of art, or that it is sloppy, awkward, and lacks intellectual rigour. It seems clear to me that Stone simply took the conventional criminal road movie and placed it in a multi-faceted form that satirises America's over-dependence on images and their transmission. The satire is aimed directly at music videos, cartoons, tabloid television, sitcoms, news, films, all of the mediums which are now presenting images and directing our consumption of images. If contradictions, gaps in logic and lack of viewpoint are brought to the surface, these flaws are simply inherent within the conventional narrative representation that Stone has directed us to see, by stripping away the usual devices that once cloaked them. Stone has created the objectivity to allow the spectator to analyse (rather than identify with) violent images of violent people. Gross dismisses this objectivity as a lack of viewpoint.

As far as calling the film awkward and sloppy, Gross is grossly mistaken – that Stone has used multiple media and film stock to present his satire is the film's most strikingly lucid concept. The aggression on screen matches the aggression of form in *Natural Born Killers*. Rather than murder Hollywood action cinema, Stone has reinterpreted the presentation of action in film on deeper formal and/or content levels. Gross just couldn't hang on for the ride.

Michigan, USA

Jean Renoir's wife

From Anthony Slide

For the last two years of Jean Renoir's life, Robert Gitt and I had the great honour to spend most weekends with him and his wife Dido, screening various films to keep him entertained. We introduced him to the work of Humphrey Jennings, whom he greatly admired, and at François Truffaut's insistence ran a number of Preston Sturges features. A few days before his death, we showed him the last film he ever watched, Fritz Lang's *M*.

It was therefore with great interest that I read Philip Strick's review of the Renoir *Letters* (S&S March), and I would like to correct a couple of mistakes. Firstly, the *Letters* do not provide the first indication of Rumer Godden's negativity towards Michael Powell's *Black Narcissus*. She wrote of the film in her 1989 autobiography, *A House with Four Rooms*. This also contains a wonderfully vivid and authentic portrait of Dido Renoir.

(Dido just hated what Godden had to say, and passed the book on to me.)

A more important error in Strick's review is the statement that Alberto Cavalcanti was Dido Renoir's uncle. This is not true. Dido was always very circumspect in discussing Cavalcanti, and it was only after her death that I learned why, from her sister Dirce. Both Dido's and Cavalcanti's families were prominent members of Brazilian society, and while not related, Dido and her two sisters grew up in close friendship with Cavalcanti, who was older. He wrote wonderful letters to the girls, told in comic strip form – thanks to Dirce, I am now the proud owner of these. When Jean married Dido, he was still legally married to his first wife, Catherine Hessling. This brief period of bigamy was something that always worried Dido, and even when she returned to France with Jean's body, she was nervous that the French authorities might find her papers to be out of order. The bigamy did more than worry Alberto Cavalcanti, it outraged him, and he refused to have anything to do again with either Jean or Dido.

California, USA

Alluding to violence

From Alan Pavelin

Your correspondent Fred Aicken (S&S April) is quite right in comparing the no-holds-barred depiction of violence unfavourably with the more restrained depiction which used to have to be observed.

As an example, consider John Ford's *The Searchers*, now regarded as one of the finest films ever made. The storyline is exceptionally violent, with the rape and murder of a mother and daughter plus assorted other scalpings, massacres, etc. If this was remade in the Stone/Tarantino manner, all these horrors would be reconstructed in loving detail, but does anyone seriously suggest that a better film would result? It is infinitely more satisfying to have these events alluded to in the way they are, as when John Wayne says "What d'ya want me to do, draw y'a picture?" to tell us about the violation and killing of the elder daughter.

Unlike Ford, Robert Bresson was not constrained by the codes of the time (1983) when he made *L'Argent*. A Stone/Tarantino remake would doubtless lovingly dwell on the heads split open by the axe murderer, but it would ruin the picture. Bresson's subtle allusions are infinitely preferable.

I am not arguing for censorship, which raises quite different issues – such as the relationship, if any, between screen and real life violence. I am merely arguing that, with occasional exceptions such as Kieślowski's *A Short Film About Killing* where it is justified by the context, explicit violence makes a film worse, not better. A similar argument applies, in my view, to explicit sex.

Chislehurst, Kent

Boy censors Girl

From Ray Brady

After negotiating a theatrical and video distribution deal with Metro Tartan in February 1994, James Ferman was shown a video copy of our film *Boy Meets Girl*. He advised Metro Tartan that owing to the then furor over video violence and the undecided political position towards films that included violent content, the chance of it receiving

video certification in the near future was highly unlikely. Metro Tartan therefore decided that it would no longer be in their interests to acquire UK rights to it (a limited theatrical release would not be economically viable on a film with no name talent and without video rights to realise the profit to justify an advance and publicity costs).

Attempting to appeal against the BBFC's unjust decision, we, as the producers, decided to take the film to various prestigious festivals around Europe (i.e. Edinburgh, Vienna, Sitges and so on) and to form a lobby of support for our film – the main argument and polemic being to highlight our criticisms of the BBFC's failure to deal effectively with the issue of violence in film. The Board's policy is the editing of violence into palatable "entertainment", removing any naturalistic portrayals of violent effects such as pain, suffering and consequence.

For many years the BBFC's intention to protect British audiences has determined their policy of removing any material that could be interpreted as prurient viewing. Although having the best intentions we believe the BBFC's methods have been having the reverse effect to their desired intentions, in that audiences have slowly been inured to and attracted to violent action through the lack of representation of realistic unattractive pain and misery.

We have succeeded in finally winning an uncut theatrical certificate and have been advised by the BBFC that a video release will now be possible, dependent on public and critical responses to *Boy Meets Girl*.

In other words, the BBFC says, 'Let the general public and film critics watch your film and if they are not too negatively vociferous and outraged by your "artistic endeavour", if the daily newspapers don't fabricate sensationalist copy-cat horror stories (that sell millions of papers without any form of financial redress to the producers and creditors of controversial films, when scaremongering is proved unfounded), then we will grant you a video certificate.'

We are now preparing to face trial by ordeal. We see *Boy Meets Girl* as 'art/exploitation', an artistic subversion of the horror-exploitation genre. We as film-makers are taking the responsibility for the images we put up on the screen; their disquieting effect was calculated to go against normal viewing experience. We intended *Boy Meets Girl* to make audiences feel uncomfortable, guilty, repelled. We are challenging our audience, asking them important questions. The only question our critics are asking is, Should we have the right to affront their artistic sensibilities? The critics are not our target audience. It is the people that enjoy watching extremely violent action and horror films that we wanted to address and listen to our filmic arguments.

London SW17

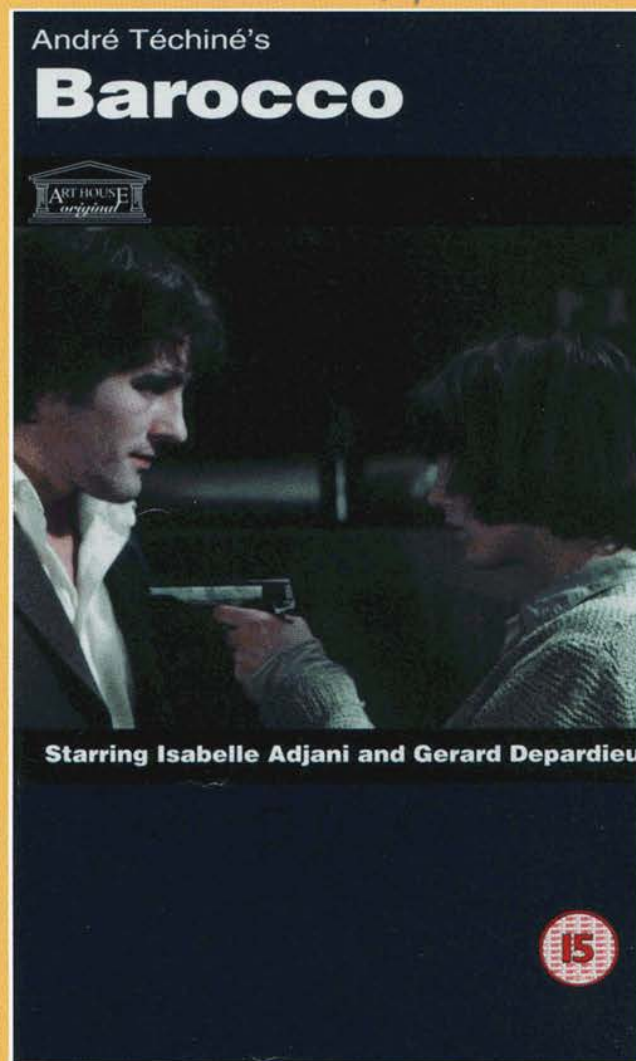
Additions and corrections

January 1995 p. 57: In the credits of *Shallow Grave*, the Producer is Andrew Macdonald, not Andrew MacDonald.

April 1995 p. 4: Working Title, not Propaganda, produced *French Kiss*; p. 47: in the credit list of *The Madness of King George*, assistant director Mary Soan not Sloane; p. 55: The film's title is *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* not *One Hundred and One Dalmatians*

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New Release



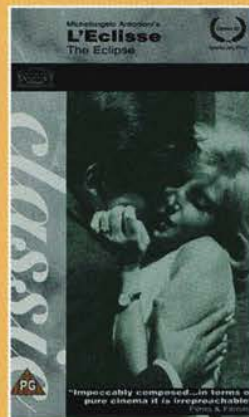
With the two biggest stars of European cinema, Isabelle Adjani and Gerard Depardieu in early leading roles, *Barocco* is an essential film for any collector – a compelling, labyrinthine thriller with striking photography from the renowned Bruno Nuytten who went on to direct Adjani in *Camille Claudel* (also available).

Coming soon: Marco Ferreri's *La Carne*, Karoly Makk's *Another Way*, Claude Chabrol's *La Rupture*, the Angel Films erotic collection including Tinto Brass' *Miranda*, the Taste Of Fear horror collection including Mario Bava's *Blood & Black Lace*.

Also available



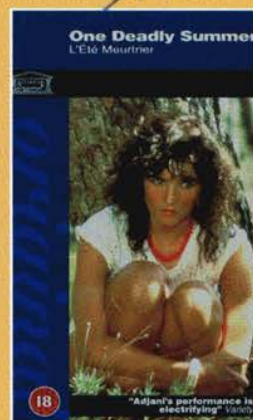
Orson Welles described *The Trial* as "The best film I ever made". Based on Franz Kafka's enigmatic novel, its visual impact and the eternal significance of its message make *The Trial* essential viewing.



Michelangelo Antonioni has just received a life-time achievement award from the American Academy. *L'Eclisse*, featured at this year's Oscar ceremony, portrays the deeply passionate relationship between Alain Delon and Monica Vitti.



La Grande Illusion, one of the greatest anti-war films, represented a turning point in Jean Renoir's career and was recently featured in the BBC's Omnibus tribute to the director. A presentation box set is also available, including the original screenplay.



Jean Becker's *One Deadly Summer* is a gripping, psychological thriller, with Isabelle Adjani giving one of her best ever performances as the manipulative and cunning Élie.



Winner of the 1982 Oscar for Best Foreign Film, Istvan Szabo's *Mephisto* is a powerful and disturbing look at a man's self deception when faced with the seductive nature of evil. A world cinema classic, featuring an outstanding central performance from Klaus Maria Brandauer.



Wickedly comic with an excellent central performance from Gerard Depardieu, Bertrand Blier's (*Les Valseuses*, *Merci La Vie*) *Buffet Froid* is a scabrous, bizarre, black comedy of the highest order.

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